

Shi'ites, have been fighting on and-off for nearly three years.

Diplomats see gloomy Mideast peace prospects

By Jack Reiden
Reuters

TEL AVIV — Western diplomats, saying an increasingly confident Israel is hardening its stance, are deeply pessimistic about prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace.

They believe the sudden influx of thousands of Soviet Jews has convinced many Israelis there is no urgent need for talks.

"I think it's a window of opportunity that is remaining closed," said one.

Diplomats from several countries repeatedly used the word "gloomy" to describe the chances of overcoming obstacles to the first talks between Israel and Palestinians.

They said they understood Israeli "security" concerns but accused Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and his right-wing Likud Party of imposing impossible conditions.

"It's a kind of euthanasia, a sweet death by strangulation of the process," one diplomat told Reuters.

Ten months after Shamir first proposed Palestinian elections in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank, there has been minimal progress on arranging even preliminary meetings to discuss how to hold a poll.

The United States has proposed a meeting in Washington to lay the groundwork for a subsequent meeting in Cairo that would arrange the elections.

However, there are still Israeli-U.S. differences over that first meeting and Shamir has been uncompromising. This month he restated claims to the occupied territories and demanded tight restrictions on who could represent Palestinians at talks.

Shamir's statements can be explained by his need to placate critics in his party before it meets Feb. 7. But foreign observers have detected a more fundamental toughening of Israel's positions.

"During the last three or four months the stance has been hardened," said one diplomat, attributing it to resurgent self-

confidence. "The mood has changed completely, not the reality."

The change is attributed partly to increased security and the army's greater ability to keep the 25-month-old Palestinian uprising under control.

But the most important factor has been the flood of Soviet Jews into Israel, exceeding even the most optimistic government predictions of just a few months ago.

The rate has reached about 5,000 a month and hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews have stated the emigration process, alarming Palestinians and other Arabs. The Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) executive committee is due to meet in Tunis Monday to discuss the influx.

Israelis who feared the combined Arab population of Israel and the occupied territories would outnumber Jews early in the next century now believe Soviet emigration will eliminate the problem.

Rather than surrendering the Gaza Strip and West Bank because of the demographic threat, Shamir now sees it as the land needed for the expanding Jewish population.

Diplomats now believe peace efforts are stalemated.

Palestinians have no alternative but to continue and hope for progress. But they have failed to convince much of the Israeli public of their ultimate readiness to live peacefully in a state alongside Israel.

The Israeli government does not want to be blamed for the collapse of peace efforts but is firmly convinced it has time on its side.

"Likud has the intention to portray to the outer world there is a process going on... but they want to just keep it alive, nothing more," said one of the foreign observers.

Diplomats could imagine few developments that would reverse the trend and end the 42-year-old Palestinian-Israeli struggle.

Despite periodic government crises, most expect the current Likud-dominated coalition to survive. In the longer term, "the traditionally right-

wing Soviet Jews will strengthen an uncompromising stance."

Most diplomats see the United States, which gives Israel \$3 billion in annual aid, as the only country able to push it into negotiations.

A senior U.S. official said last week that Israel would be unlikely to get the extra aid it needed to cope with the Soviet influx if it vacillated over peace talks or tried to settle the newcomers in the occupied territories.

But diplomats think Palestinians are unrealistic to expect heavy U.S. pressure on Israel for concessions which it says could threaten its existence.

"I think it's all pretty depressing," said a European diplomat. "It's difficult to see where it goes next."

Iranian call

Moscow should stop the flow of Soviet Jews to the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, a Tehran newspaper said Sunday.

The Tehran Times said the Kremlin was ignoring its moral responsibilities by allowing the Jews to emigrate to Israel.

"The Zionist leaders are explicitly using the East European Jews to perpetuate their occupation of Palestinian lands," said the newspaper, which is close to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Quoted by the Iranian news agency IRNA received in Cyprus, the Tehran Times said Moscow's policy of allowing its Jewish citizens to leave the Soviet Union was acceptable and welcome.

"(But) should... the freedom of immigration for one group obstruct justice to others and curb their right of ownership over their motherland?" the paper said in a reference to Arab and Western fears that the immigrants would displace Palestinians in the occupied territories.

"By turning a blind eye to such international and moral responsibility the Soviet leadership is only dimming the prospect for the liberation of Palestine."



BATTLE SCENE: Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin visits a house in South Lebanon which was attacked by Israeli soldiers and allied militiamen last week. An Israeli colonel was killed in the ensuing clash with resistance fighters.

Israel, E. Germany discuss diplomatic relations in Denmark

TEL AVIV (AP) — An Israeli government representative left Sunday for preliminary talks with East German officials on establishing diplomatic relations, the foreign ministry announced.

A ministry official said the meeting had been requested by East Germany, which has never had diplomatic ties with Israel.

The foreign ministry also issued a statement praising the agreement last week between the Soviet and Israeli chambers of commerce to set up offices in each other's country.

The statement described the fact as "a milestone in the renewal of commercial and economic ties," which have been severed for more than three decades, and said it hoped the agreement would lead to full diplomatic relations.

The Soviet Union and most Eastern bloc nations cut diplomatic ties with Israel after the 1967 Middle East war. The Soviets severed economic ties earlier to express anger over Israel's Suez Canal campaign against Egypt in the 1956 war.

The statement also urged the Soviets to carry out an agreement providing for resumption of direct flights between the two countries by Israel's El Al airlines and Aeroflot, the Soviet national airline. The agreement, reached last December, has not yet been implemented by Moscow.

The announcement on East Germany came two weeks after reports that quiet contacts were under way between the two sides.

Israeli officials declined to confirm the earlier reports.

A foreign ministry official, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity, said Sunday the talks were to take place in Europe, but declined to say where. Israel Radio reported that the talks were being held in Copenhagen.

He said Israel was being represented by Michael Shilo, the ministry's adviser on Jewish diaspora affairs and a former consular official in Bonn.

All Soviet bloc states except Romania severed diplomatic relations with Israel in 1967. Hungary renewed ties last September, and Israeli officials expect Poland and Czechoslovakia to follow suit in the near future.

Iran accuses dissident group of foiled hijack

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran's Parliament Speaker Mahdi Karrubi said Sunday that a U.N. human rights investigation team currently in Tehran must be made aware of atrocities committed by an Iraq-based opposition group, Tehran Radio reported.

The broadcast, monitored in Nicosia, quoted him as saying that "we invite the human rights commission investigating human rights issues in Iran, to further become acquainted with the dirty and terrorist nature of the mullahs."

The Baghdad-based Iranian opposition group, Mujahadeen-e-Khalq, are referred to by Iranian officials and media as the mullahs, or hypocrites.

Karrubi blamed the attempted hijacking of an Iranian airliner Thursday on the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq, the radio reported.

A United Nations human rights commission headed by Salvadoran envoy Reynaldo Galindo Pohl is on a week's visit to Tehran to investigate human rights abuses there.

The Mujahadeen reported that he has been deluged by torture victims and relatives of those executed by the government and that they staged a three-day sit-in at the U.N. office in Tehran. The opposition group said this led to

Sudan rebels to allow evacuation of Juba

CAIRO (AP) — The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) said it would stop shelling the capital of war-torn south Sudan Monday to allow evacuating foreigners there.

In a broadcast monitored in London Sunday, the rebels said the ceasefire was agreed upon during a meeting at the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa with an unnamed U.S. diplomat representing the United States, Britain, and international relief agencies.

It said the two sides agreed Friday that air evacuation from Juba should take place Monday from 0600 to 1800 local time.

The broadcast was not specific but the only known foreigners to be in Juba are relief workers.

The Sudanese government suspended international relief flights to war-affected areas in south Sudan in November, saying it took the measure guarantee the safety of relief workers.

But it said Wednesday that it would allow international relief organization to airlift 5,000 tonnes of food donated by the European Community from Nairobi, Kenya, to Juba.

The Sudanese government also said it has given permission to the International Committee of the

Death toll goes up in Tunisian floods

TUNIS (Agencies) — Floods in southern Tunisia have killed at least 30 people and caused damage of more than \$200 million, according to the official news agency TAP.

It said 27 people were still missing after the floods, caused by five days of torrential rain. It put damage estimates at 200 million dinars (\$222 million).

The floods are thought to have destroyed 13,000 homes, damaged another 23,000 and swept away at least 14,000 head of livestock.

Extensive damage has been reported to roads, railways, farms and drinking water supplies. In the Sidi Bouzid region officials said some 500 wells were unusable.

Sunny weather since Friday has enabled relief supplies to be taken to most stricken areas in nine southern provinces but some villages are still marooned by floodwaters.

The Health Ministry said measures were being taken to prevent outbreaks of disease.

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, expressing his "deep pain" of the flooding in Tunisia, Saturday ordered the immediate transfer of \$50 million in aid to the country.

The Saudi Press Agency distributed the text of the covering cable that Fahd sent to Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali.

As of Friday, the floods had killed 25 people and destroyed at

least 15,850 homes.

Expressing his condolences to the families of the dead, the king said the aid was meant to "ease the pain of those who are suffering and as a contribution from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to confront expenses for relief work."

Fahd had also sent \$50 million in immediate help to King Hassan of Morocco to combat damage from a major oil spill in early January resulting from an explosion in the fully laden Iranian supertanker Khark 5.

Protests

Protesters angry at delays in aid after the floods have tried to storm government offices in the second such protest in a week, TAP said Sunday.

About 500 people marched Saturday to local government offices in the southwestern town of Nefta but security forces prevented them from seizing the buildings.

The agency said they then pelted the building with rocks, molested a local official and set fire to a parked car.

The government blamed Muslim fundamentalists for a previous incident in the town of Sidi Bouzid in which demonstrators attacked the local governor's offices.

Ben Ali admitted that complaints were legitimate when he dismissed the governor of Sidi Bouzid province.

Saudi Arabia gives \$12 m to intifada

NICOSIA (Agencies) — Saudi Arabia Saturday gave the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) \$12 million to support the two-year-old uprising in the Israeli-occupied territories, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said.

"The PLO received \$12,040,000... for November and December 1989," PLO Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Rafiq Al Natsheh told SPA.

He said Saudi Arabia was the only Arab country fulfilling its obligations to the group.

Riyadh has paid the PLO around \$850 million over the last

10 years under terms of pledges by Arab countries to help the PLO and Arab states on the frontline of conflict with Israel.

Since January 1989, King Fahd ordered an extra \$6 million a month to help finance the uprising.

"The summit conference of the Arab League, hosted by Algeria in June 1988, pledged a one-shot donation of \$128 million for the intifada plus a monthly payment of \$43 million for as long as it lasted."

The PLO has also complained that Arab countries are not meeting their contributions.

DFLP says fighter missing after battle

BEIRUT (AP) — The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) said one of its fighters was missing after a clash with Israeli troops and allied militiamen in South Lebanon Friday.

A communique distributed in Beirut late Saturday by the DFLP identified the missing guerrilla as Mohammad Habbaj, a 19-year-old Lebanese who joined the group in 1988.

The DFLP claimed in previous communiques that a raiding guerrilla squad that allegedly ambushed an Israeli army patrol in Israel's self-designated "security zone" Friday had returned safely to base.

"But a later check has established that comrade Mohammad Habbaj, code named Abu Samra, was not among the returning fighters," Saturday's communique said.

The PLO faction, which is headed by Nayef Hawatmeh, said it held Israel "responsible for any harm that befalls the missing comrade."

Israeli sources said Israeli-backed Lebanese militiamen in South Lebanon captured an armed Palestinian guerrilla heading towards Israel Saturday.

They said members of the South Lebanon Army who captured the man said he had an automatic rifle and belonged to the DFLP.

The DFLP had claimed that nine Israeli soldiers were either killed or wounded in the alleged ambush and ensuing battles as the raiders, whose number was not mentioned, fought their way out of the "security zone."

Also Saturday, the Amal militia claimed responsibility for a roadside bomb and a land mine that exploded five hours apart in the "security zone" Friday.

The claim came in a brief Amal communique issued in the southern port city of Tyre, without any elaboration.

Security sources had said three Israeli soldiers were wounded in the blasts near Baraachit, a village that houses the command of the Irish battalion of the U.N. peacekeeping force in South Lebanon.

The area of operations of the nine-nation U.N. force overlaps with the "security zone" that Israel carved out in 1985, when it withdrew the bulk of its occupation army three years after invading Lebanon.

The zone, which has a predominantly Shi'ite population, is 10 to 16 kilometres deep, stretching from the Mediterranean coast to the slopes of Mount Hermon.

It is controlled by the South Lebanon Army, a mostly Christian militia of 3,500 men armed, trained and funded by Israel, assisted by an estimated 1,500 Israeli troops.

Hostages alive in Beirut, British paper reports

LONDON (AP) — The Sunday Correspondent newspaper, quoting Iranian sources, reported Sunday that Western hostages were alive in Lebanon.

The report said the unnamed sources in Hizbollah, a fundamentalist Shi'ite faction, had confirmed that the hostages, numbering 17 according to the newspaper's information, are "fit and well."

The newspaper reported the hostages are kept in small groups and moved regularly from one safe house to another in west Beirut.

The front-page story quoted a conversation heard by London-based reporter Hala Jaber at a wake she attended recently in Beirut of a Hizbollah member killed in South Lebanon.

The Lebanese-born journalist said she head a well-known Hizbollah member tell her unidentified contact he had guarded hostages John McCarthy and Thomas Sutherland in the basement of a house in the southern suburbs of west Beirut.

The paper quoted the Hizbollah member as saying the guards had instructions to keep the hostages healthy.

Most Western hostages in Lebanon are believed to be held

by factions of Hizbollah, which received financial support from Iran.

Hizbollah works closely with units of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, stationed in Lebanon since Israel's 1982 invasion, to build influence among the country's 1.5 million Shi'ites, Lebanon's largest sect.

The longest held hostage is Terry Anderson, 42, chief Middle East correspondent of the Associated Press, who was kidnapped on March 16, 1985.

McCarthy, 33, a British television journalist, was kidnapped April 17, 1986 as he drove to Beirut airport to flee the country.

Scottish-born U.S. citizen, Sutherland, 57, the acting dean of agriculture at the American University of Beirut, was abducted June 9, 1985.

"This was not the usual Beirut talk, rumour mingled with speculation masquerading as fact," Jaber wrote about the conversation at the wake.

"These were two friends, talking privately after a funeral in the heartland of Hizbollah. Nor did it seem likely that Hizbollah was deliberately leaking information; they could do that far more effectively by sending a photograph or a videotape of the hos-

tages to a Western news agency or a local newspaper."

The Sunday Correspondent said the conversation was confirmed by a senior, unidentified member of Hizbollah's security network, who said McCarthy and Sutherland were held together.

"They are in the same cell. All the other hostages are alive and well," the newspaper quoted the source as saying. "They are not held in the same place for security reasons. They have been split into small groups in various parts of the suburbs."

Jill Morrell, a television journalist who has campaigned for McCarthy's release, said the report matched information she had received from French hostage Paul Kaufmann, who was freed in 1988, the Sunday Correspondent reported.

"It is the most encouraging news we have had for a long time. There have been so many stories, but this one sounds as if it makes sense," the Sunday Correspondent quoted Morrell as saying.

The newspaper quoted British government sources as saying the report was "interesting and possible."

The Foreign Office had no comment.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77111-19

PROGRAMME ONE
15:30 Koran
15:40 Programme review
15:45 Children programmes
15:50 News summary in Arabic
15:55 World News
16:00 Local programme
16:05 Programme review
16:10 News in Arabic
16:15 Arabic series
16:20 News in Arabic
16:25 Local programme
16:30 News summary in Arabic

PROGRAMME TWO
16:30 Nick, Chasse des Elies
16:35 News in French
16:40 Weekly Sport magazine
16:45 News in Hebrew
16:50 Local programme
16:55 News in Arabic
17:00 Empty Nest
17:05 Kano and Abel
17:10 News in English
17:15 Comedy

PRAYER TIMES

05:30 Fajr
06:27 (Shrine) Duha
11:49 Dhuhr
14:45 'Asr
17:10 Maghreb
18:30 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifish Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 634590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrence Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 63541
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 626343
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 772561
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Assman International Church Tel. 685325
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811255
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 654932

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Gradual rise in temperatures will occur with the appearance of some clouds at different altitudes and winds will be northeasterly moderate. In Amman, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMBULANCE
Dr. George Al Sabouni 776751
Dr. Adel Dahdoub 893644
Dr. Abdul Hafez Al Khawajeh 791954
Dr. Walid Al Smadi 682266
Fire station 661912
Police 775121
Traffic Police 843402
Public Security Department 896390
Hotel Complaints 603031
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Alman Municipality 787111
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephones 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680103
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power

ZARQA:

Dr. Yousef Abu Sa'd (—)
Khalaf pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Emergency 630341
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 603031
Hotel Complaints 603030
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Alman Municipality 787111
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephones 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680103
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power

Company

RJ Flight Information 636381
Queen Alia Int. Airport 06-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 06-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813613/52
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644412
Jabal Amman Maternity 627362
Malles, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsel 664171/4
Samselani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musharraf Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/51
Al-Ahli, Abdali 666164/6
Jalal, Abdali 77101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marja 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarga Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarga National Hospital (09)991071
Jba Sha Hospital (09)986732
PRINCE:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275535
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272775
Jba Al Nafar Hospital (02)274100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (08)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
07:45 Baghdad (RJ)
09:00 Damascus (RJ)
09:00 Sanaa (RJ)
09:30 Cairo (RJ)
09:45 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:00 Dhahran, Kuwait (RJ)
10:15 Larnaca (RJ)
11:15 Agaba (RJ)
11:45 Cairo (RJ)
12:45 Vienna, Istanbul (RJ)
13:15 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
13:30 Baghdad (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

09:10 Sanaa (RJ)
10:00 Baghdad (RJ)
10:45 Cairo (RJ)
11:00 Kuwait (RJ)
11:15 Dhahran, Kuwait (RJ)
11:30 Larnaca (RJ)
11:45 Agaba (RJ)
12:45 Vienna, Istanbul (RJ)
13:15 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
13:30 Baghdad (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
09:00 Agaba (RJ)
11:15 Vienna, Istanbul, New York (RJ)
12:15 Frankfurt, Copenhagen (RJ)
13:30 Damascus (RJ)
13:30 Dhahran, Kuwait (RJ)
13:45 Kuwait, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
13:50 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
14:10 Jordan (RJ)
14:15 Cairo (RJ)
14:30 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
09:00 Baghdad (RJ)
09:00 Damascus (RJ)
09:00 Sanaa (RJ)
09:30 Cairo (RJ)
09:45 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:00 Dhahran, Kuwait (RJ)
10:15 Larnaca (RJ)
11:15 Agaba (RJ)
11:45 Cairo (RJ)
12:45 Vienna, Istanbul (RJ)
13:15 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
13:30 Baghdad (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

Five envoys present credentials to King

AMMAN (J.T.) — Five newly appointed ambassadors to Jordan Sunday presented their credentials to the Majesty King Hussein at separate ceremonies held in the presence of the Chief of the Royal Court, Shaif Zaid Ben Shaker, the King's political advisor Adnan Abu Odah, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zaid and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Marwan Al

The new ambassadors are Abdullah Jubara of Sudan, Cheng DeLiang of China, Ali Tayyib Abdul Rahman of Palestine, Tarek Khan Hridi of Pakistan and Tadayuki Notoyama of Japan. The armed forces band played the national anthems of the five countries as well as the Jordanian national anthem.

Two Jordanians missing in Kuwait

AMMAN (Petra) — Two Jordanian citizens have been reported missing in Kuwait and Kuwait security authorities have launched a wide scale investigation to find them, according to Jordan's Ambassador to Kuwait Nabil Al Talhouk.

Talhouk, who did not name the two citizens, said they were last seen eight days ago taking a cruise near the island of Fela off the Kuwait coast. Search operations were continuing but no trace of the two men was found, according to Talhouk.

1,000 schools needed in next 10 years — ministry

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Education is in need of at least 1,000 more schools in the next ten years in order to cope with the rapidly increasing number of students, according to ministry Secretary-General Member Al Masri.

"Schools in Jordan receive 30,000 male and female new students every year and this requires more space and more classes to give them a proper education," Masri told a visiting education delegation from Kuwait.

He said that plans had been made for building 430 schools in the first stage and the rest would be constructed in two stages.

According to Masri, a total of 200 schools in Jordan provide training on computers and the ministry wants to spread this to all schools in the future.

He said that in accordance with resolutions taken by the first National Educational Conference held in 1987, vocational education and computer science had been introduced in the curriculum as compulsory subjects for all students.

Masri reviewed with the visiting delegation steps being taken to overhaul the education system in the Kingdom and said that a total of 320 teachers were now receiving advanced training courses to help in the effort to overhaul the system.



Jordan's agriculture potential gets international exposure

By Sana Atiyeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan has a high potential to penetrate the European market with its high-quality agricultural products, but there is a dire need for intense efforts to modernize the process of grading, packing and shipping in the Kingdom, according to agricultural experts.

With the first-ever broad participation in what is billed as the biggest agricultural exhibition in the world, Jordanian exporters have been offered a chance to learn what the European market requires in quantity as well as quality upon arrival. A team of 10 Jordanian exporters — eight of them from the private sector and two representing the Agricultural Marketing Organisation (AMO) — is participating in the annual international Green Week Berlin in West Germany which opened Friday.

The exhibition is expected to draw more than half a million visitors from all parts of the world, according to an official from the Agricultural Marketing Development Project (AMDP) funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The AMDP is a major financier of the Kingdom's participation in the event, and the West German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) is paying for Jordan's 60 square metre space at the 74,000-square-metre exhibition grounds.

According to Jamil Zureikat, the AMDP coordinator who is working closely with the AMO — a government agency — high-quality vegetables grown in the Jordan Valley are the main items on display at the Kingdom's stall.

Zureikat told the Jordan Times that the AMO had already shipped four loads of vegetables, a tomato each, to the exhibition. The AMO bought the produce from the exporters and handled the packaging and delivery to West Germany.

Mostly displaying green and hot pepper, cucumbers, tomatoes, green beans, eggplants, zucchini, oranges, lemons, as well as samples of carnations, the Jordanian delegation expects to benefit a great deal from Green Week, scheduled to last until Feb. 4.

This is the first high-scale private sector participation in such an internationally-renowned exhibition of agricultural products," said Mousther Azar, project officer of the AMDP.

"We expect Jordanian exporters to make deals with German and European importers," Azar said.

According to one exporter taking part in the event, Mohammad Atiyeh, Green Week gives exporters a chance to study the German and European market.

"This is a good opportunity for us to learn methods in marketing our agricultural products in Europe; how to grade, package and deliver the produce in an outstanding manner in order to compete with other exporting countries," Atiyeh said.

He added that the agricultural equipment on display would give the Jordanian participants an idea of modern and up-to-date machinery that could be useful in agriculture here.

The acting chief of party of AMDP and agricultural economist, Lloyd Brown, told the Jordan Times that the Jordanian participants not only have the opportunity to display their products and formulate possible contracts with German and European importers but also a good chance to learn what the European market requires.

"Through Green Week, they (exporters) will better understand the European quality and standards of produce required by the importers. They will also get an idea about the timing of market windows — a specific period of time when certain products are needed in that part of the world," Brown said.

He noted that there was a very large market for agricultural produce in Europe, "especially at this time of year (winter), where Europe imports large quantities of produce."

Jordan can compete

Brown asserted that Jordan was in a position to actively compete with other countries for the European market because of the quality which the country's produce.

According to Brown, a major problem lies in post-harvesting procedures: packaging, sorting, grading and shipping. He cited the management of exports as another problem facing Jordanian exporters.

"Exporters should be able to identify the markets, manage the production and post-production handling to ensure that the quality product arrives the destination in an orderly, timely fashion," Brown said.

He added that Jordanian exporters do not have enough experience in exporting, especially to European buyers, "who have very specific regulations and high standards."

Brown said that the exporters were more accustomed to traditional markets, such as the Arabian Gulf states. "This is also changing; now there is a lot more competition in the Gulf now, which requires Jordan to improve their export management quality," he said.

The Jordanian delegation to Green Week will have the opportunity to understand the European market, especially that every hotel room in Berlin has been "extremely" booked for participants and visitors to the event, according to one of the delegation's organisers from AMDP.

She said that after the exhibition ends, the delegation is scheduled to take a five-day guided tour to the major agricultural areas in Germany, including Frankfurt, Munich and Dusseldorf.

The organiser said that more than just agricultural produce will be displayed. "We are also displaying Jordanian handicrafts, baskets, brass and other local handicrafts. There is also a model present at the exhibition wearing Jordanian traditional dress," she said.

The organiser added that the delegation would benefit from participating in three separate forums on agricultural policy, fruits and vegetables and on flowers and horticulture.

Merchants push demand for higher profit margins

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordanian Supply Merchants Association Sunday issued a statement in support of their demand that the margin of profit on imported products should be 22 per cent rather than remain at 15 per cent set by the government last year.

The statement said the increase in prices does not mean that "it is pure profit but it will cover transport and administrative costs, refrigeration, storage and other expenses."

The statement came in reply to demands made by the Minister of Supply to the association to reduce prices of food supplies and contribute to the national effort to

reduce the soaring cost of living in Jordan. The association had earlier urged the Ministry of Supply to fix prices on all food supplies still lying in the ministry's warehouses because much of the products would go bad with time. However, the statement said that the association would accept the present arrangement for 15 per cent profit until a joint government-parliamentary committee had completed its investigation into the whole issue and reached a compromise solution.

The statement said that circumstances beyond the association's control, such as a rise in the prices of commodities in the

country of origin and a rise in the exchange rate of the U.S. dollar were behind the hike in prices of all imported commodities.

The association estimates the price hike between 90 and 100 per cent based on the exchange rate of the dollar, which was worth 340 fils before 1989 and is now 700 fils, the statement said.

In addition, the statement said, the government has, since November 1989, imposed a two per cent extra duty on imported goods, including food supplies imported from Western European countries, while the Europeans have now removed all subsidies on exported goods.

APC posts record output

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Arab Potash Company (APC) plant in Ghor Al Safi recorded an all-time high production figure for any single day Friday, when 5,010 metric tons were produced, according to the plant's deputy director-general, Nasser Sadoun.

Potash production had previously reached an all-time high last year when production increased from 1,309,627 metric tons in 1988 to 1,330,444 metric tons in 1989.

The plant, which has been operating since 1983, hopes to produce 1,400,000 metric tons in 1990, Sadoun said during a tour of the plant by diplomats and journalists.

APC Managing-Director Ali Nsour said last week that profits had increased by \$5 million in 1989, up from \$120 in 1988 to \$125 in 1989. He said that the increase in earnings in 1989 was a result of a rise in international potash prices and the devaluation of the Jordanian dinar.

Potash cost \$67 a tonne in 1987, but the figure rose to \$95 a ton in 1989, Sadoun said. He said that the estimated price of potash on the international market should be no lower than \$90 in 1990. He added that the price of potash depended largely on the output of the main producers of potash namely the USSR, Canada, West Germany and East Germany.

While Jordan and Canada (for example) utilise very little of the potash that they produce, the USSR accounts for 23 per cent of potash utilised worldwide. North America, Western Europe and Asia consume between 16 and 17 per cent each and Eastern Europe consumes about 10 per cent.

An average of 33 per cent of APC's sales go to India, and about 22 per cent to China while the rest is sold to Italy, France and several Asian countries.

Potash, a widely used fertiliser ingredient, accounts for about 20 per cent of Jordan's exports.

The company, which started out in 1983 with a high percentage of non-Jordanian white and blue collar staff, today employs over 1,300 people, 80 per cent of them Jordanian.

According to Sadoun, the company hopes to begin making profits as of 1991, after the company's \$60 million accumulated losses are covered and is expected to invite bids for a new refinery line in early 1991.

Arab panel to meet in Tunis on intifada

TUNIS (Petra) — A seven-member Arab League team will open a meeting here Feb. 5 to resume world-wide efforts to mobilise public opinion in support of the Palestinian people's intifada in the occupied Arab territories and to expose Israel's inhuman practices against the population.

A statement issued by the Arab League headquarters here said that the foreign ministers of Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria and Egypt as well as the head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Arab League's secretary-general would hold plan new moves on the international level in general and contacts with members of the U.N. Security Council in particular concerning the situation in the occupied Arab lands.

"The meeting will mark the start of a pan-Arab action designed to serve the Palestinian cause and to give momentum to the current efforts to convene an international peace conference on the Middle East," according to Farouk Al Kaddoumi, head of the PLO's Political Department.

He said that the offensive was aimed at ensuring the rights of the Palestinians in their homeland and to end Israel's oppressive practices in the occupied lands.

The seven-member committee, which was set up in 1987, toured several European countries and the United States in its drive to support the Palestinian people's cause. Kaddoumi said that the question of Soviet Jewish immigration to Palestine would be on the agenda of the committee meetings.

JPMC pays JD 40m income tax for 1989

AMMAN (Petra) — The Income Tax Department Sunday announced that it had received a cheque of JD 40 million from the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) as a first instalment due on its profits for 1989.

The department said that the company will pay the remaining JD 10 million in income tax next month. The cheque was handed to the department by JPMC Director-General Wasef Azar.

According to Azar, Jordan, which is the third biggest rock phosphate exporter, earned a record \$434 million from its highest ever exports of the fertiliser-base last year.

Police apprehend counterfeit group

AMMAN (J.T.) — A four-member group, including a citizen from another Arab country, was apprehended by the police in Amman while trying to sell a large amount of forged Jordanian currency, a local daily reported Sunday.

A report in Al Dustour Arabic daily Sunday said that police found 37,320 Jordanian "tunans" in the possession of the group before it was able to peddle them in local money markets.

According to the report, which quoted Ismail Ragheb, the attorney general in Amman, an investigation into the group is continuing. The report said the Public Security Department's (PSD) office in charge of counterfeiting and drugs first learned about the case when it was tipped by an informer about a substantial amount of the counterfeit money and trying to exchange it for a piece of land. It said that the non-Jordanian Arab had been working as a bus driver between Jordan and neighbouring countries and that was how he was able to smuggle in the money. It said that the money was hidden in the garden of a house belonging to one of the group.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

TUNISIAN MINISTER LEAVES: Tunisian Minister of Culture and Information Al Bahi Ben Idris left Amman Sunday at the conclusion of a three-day visit to Jordan. During the visit, the Tunisian official delivered a message from Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali to His Majesty King Hussein dealing with the developments in the Arab and international arenas and their impact on Arab issues including the Palestine question. The Tunisian official also discussed with several senior officials means to bolster bilateral relations (Petra).

WEST BANK COLLEGE APPLICANTS: The Ministry of Higher Education has sent memoranda to all community colleges in Jordan instructing them to consider applications from West Bank students who passed the twelfth examination in 1989 and earlier from Sunday and no later than Feb. 1. Ministry of Higher Education sources said. These colleges, the sources added, would choose students in accordance with their averages and available seats. The names of accepted students will be published in local papers no later than Feb. 5 (Petra).

INTERNATIONAL BOOK EXHIBITION: The second Amman International Book Exhibition will open Feb. 20 with the participation of representatives of a large number of publication houses, institutions, as well as Arab and foreign universities. The exhibition will cover about 25 topics of science and culture with about 1.25 million books. Jordanian and Arab specialists will hold cultural activities and seminars on the sidelines of the exhibition. The exhibition is regarded a completion of the first exhibition held last year under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan (Petra).

JORDAN GIVES IRAQI SAPLINGS: The Ministry of Agriculture has presented 30,000 pine saplings to the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture. This step is part of cooperation between the ministries in Iraq and Jordan to develop agriculture in both countries (Petra).

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

LECTURE

★ A lecture, in Arabic, by Dr. Hassel Al Shayyab entitled "Democracy in Jordan — past and present" at Abdel Hameed Shoman Foundation — 6:00 p.m.

FILM

★ A French film entitled "Le Dernier Metro" at the French Cultural Centre — 8:00 p.m.

Arafat appeals to Moscow

(Continued from page 1)

stand fast against U.S. pressures for "compromise" on Middle East peace issues and threatened to resign from his job if he loses an upcoming party vote of confidence.

It is "self understood that if the top institution of Likud doesn't accept the policy of Likud's leader, then I can no longer fill this position," Shamir, who heads the right-wing Likud bloc, said in a pre-recorded interview broadcast on army radio.

The Likud meeting has been called for Feb. 7 by central committee chairman and Industry Minister Ariel Sharon to debate his objections to Israel's plan to hold elections.

Saturday's threat was the second time this week Shamir has said he would step down as Sharon and his lobby known as the "constraining ministers" succeeds in undermining party support for Israel's plan.

This time, Shamir added he would insist on a separate vote for his own proposals, suggesting

he would not suffice with a rejection of Sharon's recommendations.

The party fighting has temporarily set back Baker's efforts to arrange a meeting of the Egyptian, American and Israeli foreign ministers in Washington.

Baker's planned meeting is supposed to set the stage for the proposed Israel-Palestinian dialogue in Cairo.

Shamir said that "this meeting, (in Washington) as is known, will not yet be held. There is no point to holding this meeting until it is clear that positions of the sides are close enough to allow a foreign ministers meeting that will end in agreed decisions."

Turning to another thorny issue, Shamir said high-ranking American officials have assured him that the administration of President George Bush never authorized recent published suggestions to decrease financial assistance to Israel.

"I am happy about these statements, I don't think there is room for any pressure," Shamir said.

'Gorbachev not under threat'

(Continued from page 1)

have mounted in recent weeks. The Communist Party in the Baltic Republic of Lithuania has broken with its Moscow comrades in a campaign for independence, and long-simmering ethnic hatreds and territorial disputes have boiled over into open warfare in the southwestern Caucasus region. Gorbachev ordered troops into the Azerbaijani capital of Baku to crush an armed takeover by Azerbaijani nationalists.

In his written comments, Shevardnadze said secession of some of the Soviet Union's independence-minded republics would not only cause military, political and economic problems for them but could "result in a major destabilization of the existing international structure."

"It is in no one's interest to see this happen," the foreign minister said in his written response.

"The problems of inter-ethnic relations are so delicate and sensitive that one should avoid any outside interference in the process of their development.

Otherwise, one can provoke unpredictable repercussions," he wrote.

Shevardnadze, whose home republic of Soviet Georgia is among those with an active nationalist movement, was practically unknown outside the Soviet Union before Gorbachev plucked him from his post as Georgian Communist Party chief to replace veteran Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko shortly after Gorbachev rose to power in March 1985.

With a warm smile and pensive manner, Shevardnadze, who marked his 62nd birthday last week, has reshaped the image of Soviet foreign policy molded for three decades by Gromyko's stony countenance.

Almost from the beginning, Shevardnadze showed a willingness to negotiate not from a standpoint of class struggle but from Gorbachev's "new thinking," which asserts that world problems can be resolved through international cooperation, disarmament and attention to "human values."

DISTINGUISHED JOB OPPORTUNITY

A leading office in Amman is seeking to employ a female translator with the following qualifications:

1. University degree.
2. Excellent command of both Arabic and English.
3. Typing, in both Arabic and English, using an IBM personal computer. Knowledge of Wordstar Word Processing is a plus.
4. Minimum of 3 years experience.

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Financial committee report to Lower House

Draft budget realistic, but fails to quantify dimensions of economic crisis

(Continued from page 4)

This clause states the government's intention to revise all its previous pricing policies, especially those related to water and the subsidy on wheat production. It intends to do this after holding consultations with the World Bank.

This clause also refers to the government's determination to reduce the general budget's dependence on loans from commercial banks and to further restrict credit facilities to the private sector and to control expenditure at the public organisations. This aims to reduce the rate of inflation from 14 per cent in 1989 to 7 per cent in 1993.

11- The eleventh clause speaks of the government's determination to adopt proper measures to achieve a stability in the balance of payments in 1993. This can be done through encouraging exports, stimulating tourism, curbing imports and adopting a flexible policy in exchange operations.

12 and 13- The report in these two clauses refers to the government's attention to reducing deficit in the general budget reaching 20 per cent in proportion to the gross domestic product for 1989 compared to 23.7 per cent in 1988. The government also expects a reduction of the deficit to reach 17 per cent in proportion to the gross national product for 1990 through increasing revenues and suppressing expenditure.

In this respect the report indicates that the government plans to create a consumption tax and to revise the taxation system in general with the purpose of reforming this system through the addition of the value added tax. This clause refers to the government's request from the IMF to dispatch a mission specialised in financial affairs to visit Jordan between June and July of 1989 to present recommendations by the end of September 1989 and to co-participate in preparing the 1990 budget.

14- In the fourteenth clause the report refers to the huge government expenditure in proportion to the gross national product, reaching nearly 50 per cent, which is in excess of 80 per cent over the current expenditure and exceeding revenues by 40 per cent. This indicates that the government spending was covered by borrowing and foreign aid. This clause also indicates that the government was aware that increases in expenditure should be less than rates of growth in the gross domestic product.

15- The fifteenth clause refers to the treasury as shouldering the additional subsidy on essential commodities by JD 38 million, considered as an assistance to the poor sector in the society to protect it from the effects of the severe austerity programme. This clause also refers to the government's attempts to direct its assistance to the needy groups in a more selective manner.

16- The sixteenth clause outlines the government's projects which the report says are being well managed and that most of them are yielding good returns. This clause also refers to the government's initiative to conduct a revision to its projects with a view to increasing their contributions to the general budget.

According to the report, projects that sustained losses will be re-examined with the purpose of being steered properly to achieve their purpose.

17- The seventeenth clause entails detailed briefing on steps to be taken by the government to deal with the deficit in the budget. This is to be through imposing a strict control over borrowing by government institutions during 1989 and 1990.

18- The eighteenth clause reflects on the government's efforts to encourage savings on the part of the public, improving allocations of funds for projects and granting banks freedom to adjust their interest rates.

19- In the nineteenth clause the report refers to a deficit in the current balance of payments as the main target of the restructuring programme.

The government aims to reduce the deficit here in proportion to the balance of payments from six per cent in 1988 to five per cent in 1989 and three per cent in 1990.

To achieve this goal, the report refers to a host of policies which entail giving incentives to exports, tourism and rationalising imports, diversifying markets which import national products, creating new channels to finance exports and reforming the customs system.

20- The report in this clause speaks about sharp reduction in the value of the Jordan dinar during 1988 and 1989.

The report reflects the government's belief that this reduction has now given incentives for exports, and that the government believes there is good prospect for stabilising the dinar's exchange rate in the near future.

21- In this clause the report

refers to the government's commitment to follow a wise policy in managing debts and reducing payments consisting from servicing foreign debt. This can be done by fixing the ceilings for short and medium term debts.

22- In this clause the government refers to the need for foreign assistance, as additional resources, and also refers to rescheduling of debts to governments and commercial banks. The government hopes that the rescheduling of debts will be on easy terms.

23- In this clause the government pledges to refrain from doing the following:

1- Imposing or increasing restrictions on payment, transfers and international exchanges.

2- Applying multi-purpose system for foreign exchange rates.

3- Concluding bilateral pay agreements not in harmony with the seventh clause of the agreement with the IMF.

4- Imposing new restrictions on imports or increasing restrictions for the purpose of adjusting the balance of payments.

In the light of the clauses in this report, the government submitted to the IMF a request for stand-by credit for 18 months of 60 million special drawing rights units corresponding to \$30 million, in addition to a compensatory loan of \$40 million.

In the light of this agreement, a total of \$1,300 million worth of installements, loans and interest for 1989-1990 are due to foreign countries and until the middle of 1991 to commercial banks have been rescheduled. Rescheduling is for a period ranging from 10 to 11 years after a grace period of five to six years.

THIRD: Cost of living: Available figures indicate an inflation of over 25 per cent in 1989 is expected to rise by 12.5 per cent in 1990 over 1989 figures, and by seven per cent in 1993 over the 1992 figures. Needless to say that the rise in the cost of living in Jordan covers a basket of services and commodities needed by the consumers including housing, transport, food, clothing, medicine and education, etc.

The cost of these commodities vary and the cost of imported commodities rose more than that of the local products because they are paid for with expensive foreign currency. But on cannot help noticing that the cost of living has risen more than expected and beyond the margin of increases in the rate of exchange of foreign currency.

This prompts one to conclude that there are other behavioural reasons behind the soaring cost of living, like monopoly. The rise in prices has created a chaos that cannot be justified in economic terms alone. This conclusion of course requires evidence and proof in figures, and requires further study.

The house has entrusted the financial committee to study this issue with the government to find a solution.

FOURTH: Consumption: It is clear that the government's economic philosophy and solutions for problems are based on consumption and the need to bridge the gap between gross domestic product (nearly JD 1,700 million in 1988) and the level of expenditure which reached 170 per cent in 1989. Of this, 103 per cent went to consumption by the private and public sectors, 26 per cent to investments by the two sectors, 41 per cent payments of foreign debts, which means that the remaining gap without paying interest is 29 per cent. The economic adaptation programme is expected to reduce this gap to 19 per cent in proportion to the gross national product of 1993 of which 92 per cent consumption in the two sectors and 27 per cent investments.

It is clear here that the volume of consumption is the main burden in the face of saving necessary funds for investments and that any reduction in consumption beyond 92 per cent is bound to steer savings towards investments and more jobs.

FIFTH: Public expenditure in the budget: The state's expenditure in the last 10 years, 1980-89, reached more than JD 8 billion spent according to the following: JD 3 billion current expenses, JD 3 billion capital and development expenditure, which includes the payment of installements of loans and interest.

The sources for expenditure came from:

Local revenues JD 4.25 billion, foreign assistance JD 1.5 billion, loans 1.5 billion, accumulative deficit JD 500 million.

We notice from these figures that the citizens of Jordan contributed towards covering half the expenditure (52 per cent) while the loans covered 18 per cent, the foreign assistance 22 per cent, thus leaving a deficit of 8 per cent.

Loans are considered as accumulative deficit and therefore the real deficit is 26 per cent, which is more than one quarter of the total expenditure or over JD 2 billion and this does not include argument spending.

For this reason the committee should give its attention to the deficit and to reduce the 1990 expenditure by JD 15 million and thus the deficit has dropped to JD 184 million down from JD 199 million.

Sixth: The financial committee's report on the 1990 draft budget:

1- Classification of the budget:

a. A positive development occurred to the budget report because it has been classified in accordance with the internationally recognised standards projecting expenditure, and revenues in different chapters from financing. Thus financing through borrowing and assistance is no more considered as revenue as was the case before. This deserves appreciation.

b. The committee would have liked to see the budget report include separate chapters dealing with development regions in Jordan in addition to the present classification system.

c. The committee would have liked to see the report containing separate classification of sectors. Therefore, the committee recommends that the House demand from the government that the 1991 budget be worked out on the basis of classes a, b and c.

2- Comprehension of the budget: The budget report was confined to ministries and institutions affiliated to them but the other public organisations which have semi-independence financially and administratively like universities, Royal Jordanian, the Railway Corporation, the National Medical Institution, the Public Transport Corporation, are not covered in the budget.

Such process can only limit the usefulness and the aims of the budget, since restricting the budget to only less than two thirds of the state's activities means that any decisions will only affect part of the government's establishments, which in turn can only obstruct the economic reform process. In addition we regard the process of keeping these institutions out of the reach of Parliament as a violation of the Constitution. Therefore, the committee recommends that the House decide to introduce an amendment to law number 39 of 1964 which provides for the drawing up of the national budget. The new provisions should state that the budget of any institution in the country must be approved by the House's financial committee. This should cover funds like those administered by the armed forces, the merchants fund at the Ministry of Supply, education tax at the Ministry of Education, etc.

3- The budget's addenda: It is unconstitutional to spend money from any appendix attached to the national budget before it is approved by Parliament and, therefore, the committee recommends that the House reject any draft law on appendices attached to the budget law if spending was done in advance starting from this year.

The government should always ask the House in advance to assign an appendix to the budget and no spending should be done before the draft law is approved.

4- Classifying the budget: An improvement has been achieved in the process of classifying the budget into expenditure, capital, and current spending; like clauses which assign spending for municipalities. But we consider certain functions within the capital projects as current expenditure and it is desirable to reconsider the classification of the budget draft for 1991.

5- Assessment of revenues and financing: The committee considers the government's assessment of revenues as realistic and there had been no exaggeration. The committee would like to present the following remarks:

a. New loans: the local revenues are JD 694 million while expenditure is JD 1,105 million. This shows the results in a JD 411 million gap which will be covered by financial assistance totalling JD 160 million, and from installements paid to the government on internal loans which total JD 50 million, and external loans due to the country totalling JD 20 million. The committee considers that it is its duty to draw the House attention that the government is borrowing a new loan totalling JD 250 million and that part of the loan will be used to pay back installements on previous loans totalling JD 68 million and that part of the revenues will be used to pay back external loans totalling JD 135 million. This means that, altogether, the country will be paying JD 203 million

in installements of debts and debt service.

Therefore the difference between what is borrowed and paid back in debt services in 1990 will be JD 47 million.

Internal loans, this year will be confined to JD 33 million. To give the House an idea we refer to the internal debt of 1987 which exceeded JD 255 million, in 1988 nearly JD 309 million and in 1989, JD 84 million.

As the debt service on internal loans is JD 60 million then the net payment of debts totals JD 27 million. Therefore, we consider internal borrowing is a step in the right direction.

b. New Arab financial assistance: The budget estimates Arab assistance to be JD 152 million compared to 253 million last year. The JD 152 million assistance represents only 65 per cent of the expected assistance since the rest goes to cover armament. Therefore, the expected assistance is JD 230 million of which JD 78 million will go to armament. Any extra assistance should be used to cover the accumulated deficit in the military armament fund which now stands at JD 513 million.

c. Revenues from taxes on income and profits: There has been an increase in tax revenues as a result of amendment to the income tax law and the profits made by the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company. The committee considers that an added burden from taxes has now resulted from profits affecting individuals (33 per cent increase) and the employees sector, nearly 13 per cent. This is an added burden in light of the economic situation.

d. TV sets licences: A tax on TV set i. being collected on each electricity meter whether the subscriber owned a television set or not. The committee sees that this tax should be confined only to those who own television sets. The minister of finance has displayed understanding in this issue and promised to amend the system.

e. Revenues on telephone calls: The committee recommends that the government conduct a study aimed to re-examine the charges on telephone calls through cooperation with other countries and in the light of availability of hard currency. The committee recommends the cancellation of official phones at officials' homes.

f. Revenues of the Jordan Investment Corporation: These revenues totalled JD 5 million only resulting from the operations of the corporation which has a capital of JD 252 million. The committee recommends a reconsideration of the shares owned by the government, especially in the hotels sector, and recommends that the government invest instead in productive projects so as to create new jobs. The committee also recommends that the government control expenditure by the public share holding companies and end overspending and corruption.

6- Assessment of expenditure: Assessment of expenditure was realistic. Subsidy on food supplies is projected by the budget to be JD 60 million, but the committee believes that it will exceed this figure.

The committee would like to point out the following:

a. Revenues from pension premiums amounts nearly to JD 13 million and the expenditure on pension reaches JD 83 million. In view of the gap there is need for a serious study to bridge it. This should be studied with due consideration to the interests of the civil and military pensioners.

b. Civil service spending amounts to JD 218 million, current spending on armed forces and civil defence and public security is JD 254 million. This clearly is an indication of the huge burden shouldered by Jordan, although military expenditure does not include armament.

c. The government pays JD 5 million annually in rent, and pays JD 5 million for electricity and fuel. These figures require deep study with the purpose of finding ways to stop wastage.

d. The cost of research and study amounts to JD 8.5 million, most of which are engineering designs. Spending on these studies amounted to JD 25 million over the past three years. Most of these studies have been awarded to foreigners.

7- Capital and development spending: The budget figures show that allocations for capital and development projects are as follows:

JD 151 million for capital projects financed through internal revenues.

JD 90 million for development projects financed through loans.

JD 12 million loan for the Cement Company to pay back part of its debt totalling JD 253 million.

Most of the major part of the spending goes to the capital or semi-capital projects, and in most cases they are non-developmental projects. The loan to the Cement Company is not for development. What remains for development is JD 90 million or nearly 8 per cent of the budget. This is a major weak point in the budget.

The figures display a negative reflection of the real development growth expected this year and also the employment possibilities expected from investments by the public sector.

The committee has made some changes to the capital sector of the budget so as to give it a development character. The committee realises that an increase in allocations for development will increase the deficit margin and for this reason the committee has approved the allocations for the capital and development sectors in the budget.

8- Reducing expenditure as proposed in the draft budget. The committee recommends

cuts in the proposed expenditure or shifting it to other clauses within the same chapter as follows:

Nine: Public organisations: The committee is of the view that many public organisations should be reexamined so as to study their administrative and financial situations. Many of these organisations conduct similar function and some have become obsolete.

Therefore, there is urgent need to study these organisations to merge them or cancel some of them so as to avoid dual work and wastage of funds.

Example of organisations that can merge: The Agricultural Credit Corporation, the Jordan Cooperative Organisation, the Agricultural Marketing Organisation and the Urban Development Corporation with the Housing Corporation. Examples of organisations that can be cancelled: Jordan Valley Authority which can be incorporated with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, and the Aqaba Region Authority which can be incorporated with the Aqaba Municipality. The

committee has noticed that the Jordan Valley Authority has made some excesses in its functions which led to further burdens on the treasury. This authority has had right to borrow from outside sources through the Ministry of Planning and this prompts the committee to recommend that the House demand an amendment to the law to make any borrowing subject to the Ministry of Planning alone.

The committee thanks Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Dubai for their support to Jordan. The committee also expressed appreciation to His Majesty King Hussein for his relentless efforts to serve the country.

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Deputies demand establishing system of accountability, propose alternative courses to remedy economic ills

Laith Shbeilat
Yaqoub Qarrash

Deputies Laith Shbeilat and Yaqoub Qarrash addressed the House by underlining the immense economic problem Jordan is facing at the moment as a result of ill-planning and poor political, social and economic and defence policies.

They criticised the various systems governing the economic and social and political life in Jordan and said they had been laid down by former colonialists to serve their own purpose. They said that had these policies been useful for Jordan, the country would not be facing critical problems and a lack of readiness to counter any aggression.

The country is weaker than ever before and its economic and social systems are in disarray thanks to those who had been giving empty promises to the people who are now faced with paying debts.

Referring to the 1990 budget, Shbeilat and Qarrash said one can notice that what has been allocated for capital expenditure far exceeds amounts allocated for development projects. They said in a joint paper that the government last year borrowed an additional JD 350 million only to aggravate the debt situation in Jordan. The government cannot maintain the level of debts due on Jordan by the end of 1990 at the same level of that by the end of 1988 as it had said in the budget report, because of the accumulating debts and services on them, and due to the government's latest borrowing of extra JD 350 million, they added.

Since the creation of the emirate in Jordan no government had yet taken a real and serious effort to deal with the recurrent deficit in the country's balance of trade. They noted that the highest rate was registered between 1981 and 1985 when it stood at JD 824 million. The 1990 budget does not show any figures about the operations and the deficits in the semi-independent institutions like Royal Jordanian (RJ), which sustained losses exceeding JD 80 million. They said that RJ is now making preparations for selling one more of its planes, and commissioners are out in the markets trying to conclude the transaction, they said. They called on Parliament to take responsibility in this matter and to hold investigations into such questions as who will benefit from such transactions. Shbeilat and Qarrash said that RJ together with other organisations have sustained a total loss of JD 820.9 million along with the armaments fund which is indebted by half a million dinars. Lack of supervision over such institutions, they said, has been a grave mistake which must be corrected.

Shbeilat and his colleague criticised the government's policy of retiring persons at an early age and said that the total amount paid to the pensioners as included in the budget stood at JD 83 million, accounting for nearly 16 per cent of the total current expenditure.

Referring to defence expenditure Shbeilat and Qarrash said that as Jordan is a country with meagre resources guarding the

longest confrontation line with the enemy, a new method for defence should be initiated so as to attain national objectives because defence in the traditional sense is impossible in view of the huge cost.

They said in their view there was no other way to defend the country except through arming the people with all types of light arms which can be produced by the armed forces workshops and plants.

They cited the popular resistance in Lebanon which constituted only members of the public who were able to confront Israel's military power. Lebanon's regular forces in their weak position were not match to any of Israel's aggressions on Lebanese territory, and it was left to the people to resist invasion.

A change in the defence strategy, in Jordan Shbeilat and Qarrash said means conquering the internal enemy represented in excessive consumption and is bound to bring about a total change in social values and bring unity to the country. What Jordan needs he added is a new economic and military strategy that will unite the people who should at the same time give more attention to agriculture and light industry, transforming each settlement into strong fortress.

Ahmad Al Kofahi

Deputy Ahmad Al Kofahi (Irbid) attacked the draft budget for being traditional and which, he said, does not rise up to the level of the present critical situation in Jordan, a country plagued with unemployment, soaring prices and poverty affecting a large sector of society.

Kofahi said the draft budget contained no plans for replenishing the gold reserves at the Central Bank of Jordan or retrieving the stolen funds which, he said, have been smuggled to banks abroad.

Nor did the draft budget provide new measures designed to control the semi-independent institutions like Royal Jordanian (RJ), which sustained losses exceeding JD 80 million. They said that RJ is now making preparations for selling one more of its planes, and commissioners are out in the markets trying to conclude the transaction, they said. They called on Parliament to take responsibility in this matter and to hold investigations into such questions as who will benefit from such transactions. Shbeilat and Qarrash said that RJ together with other organisations have sustained a total loss of JD 820.9 million along with the armaments fund which is indebted by half a million dinars. Lack of supervision over such institutions, they said, has been a grave mistake which must be corrected.

Kofahi, who is member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, called for institutionalising Islamic values in production and in achieving social justice. He suggested:

1- That the government and people retrieve their billions of dollars in Western nations and utilise them in useful and productive projects.

2- That all persons in responsible positions give extra care in handling public funds. He criticised those who squander funds to serve their own selfish interest, wasting millions on vehicles, furniture and other matters.

3- That the government should end all allowances given to officials as rewards, per diems, and others so as to tighten control on public spending.

4- That funds be placed in the hands of those who can safeguard them, and that the government put an end to the behaviour of the rich who squander funds on festivals, recreational activities and parties which benefit no one.

5- That the rich should help the



Speaker Suleiman Arrar and deputies consult each other during Sunday's session of the Lower House (photos by Yousef Al 'Allan)

poor by paying zakat (alms to the poor).

6- That measures be taken to discourage people from hoarding gold and silver without benefit to their society.

7- That strict penalties be imposed on those who receive bribes in their dealings in public business and those who are in responsible positions who encourage corruption like favouring certain contractors in tenders for projects.

Referring to the draft budget, Kofahi called on the government to follow the following steps to reform the economy:

1- The country's debts: The government should stop borrowing more money from any source, should cancel all loan agreements, and resist any pressure from the debtor countries.

2- The government should take measures to provide funds for paying debts by:

a) Questioning officials about their wealth and giving rewards to people who can come up with information leading to exposing manipulators of public funds.

b) Introducing legislation forcing those who smuggled their money abroad to return it to the country.

c) Introducing a law to force people to pay zakat (alms to the poor).

d) Imposing a special tax for the national construction effort to be imposed on banks, companies, the rich and the expatriates.

e) Dispatching Jordanian delegations to Arab and Islamic countries to raise funds and help Jordan confront Israel's expansionist plans.

f) Ending the present system of interest on loan and adopting the Islamic system.

g) Reducing current expenses in all projects and adhering to austerity.

In dealing with the question of unemployment, Kofahi said that the government can help end the problem by initiating productive projects like helping the Ministry of Agriculture to promote the livestock and agricultural wealth. He said that the Ministry of Industry and Trade should lead the way for the universities, the Royal Scientific Society, vocational training centres and armed forces workshops in producing all Jordan's needs of light industrial

products which can be developed in the future.

Kofahi called on the natural resources authority to double its efforts in exploiting mineral resources and to search for oil and natural gas.

On current expenditure, Kofahi called on the government to increase the salaries of low-income groups and urged the government to link wages to the cost of living.

He urged the government to cut expenditure on the military sector and to turn the major part of the intelligence service to other offices and institutions.

The deputy expressed the view that the government subsidised commodities are benefiting the rich more than the poor people.

He said subsidy should be made to benefit the low income groups only and that the government should turn the rest of the funds to the National Aid Fund which helps the needy people.

Fu'ad Khalafat

Deputy Fu'ad Khalafat of Tafleeh said that all officials in charge of running Jordan's economy must "have technical and specialised capabilities. Furthermore, they should be sincere, just, and truthful. On this basis, I demand that the government reconsider officials and leaders who will lead this country and extricate it from its current crisis." He also called for improving general services in Tafleeh Governorate.

Yousef Khasawneh

Deputy Yousef Khasawneh from the Irbid Governorate told the House that the difficulties which Jordan is facing at the moment as a result of unemployment, debts, bad educational levels and soaring prices are only symptoms of the real illness which can be summed up in corruption that dominated the previous administrations.

He said that corruption and ill administration in the past years presented themselves in:

1- Favouritism and nepotism, with all the important positions given to particular groups who benefited at the expense of the

rest of people.

2- The previous administrations more often than not placed the wrong man in the wrong position. Placing the right person in the right position would help solve many of our problems.

3- People in responsible positions in the previous administrations lost all values and did not feel ashamed in trespassing on people's dignity and in depriving people from their freedom and their property, and finally were not deterred by any force from stealing public funds and the treasury.

4- People in key positions who made a name for themselves abroad came to Jordan to assume important positions only to abuse power and to exploit people and their country. They pillaged Jordan, fought against the honest and hardworking people and built for themselves a glory. He said that Jordan boasts that it can carry out heart transplant operations at a time when many of its people lack proper vaccination against common diseases, and has today failed to deal properly with such diseases like measles, and meningitis.

He said that Jordan has been building a glory in the world of civil aviation without possessing a single aircraft. In this it has incurred huge debts which the people of this country are now forced to pay.

Why should our national air carrier spend nearly a JD 1 million on a boat that cruises the oceans carrying eight women, all foreigners and have no relation with this country whatsoever. Khasawneh said that values in Jordan collapsed before the dinar because stealing was strife and corruption was unabated.

The deputy proposed that as a first step there should be a good clean up of the governing administrations, and "we should first place the right man in the right place and remove all those under suspicion to be replaced by honest people with high qualifications."

Khasawneh called on the government to give more attention to protecting public funds, and urged it to request Arab countries that used to provide financial assistance to Jordan to give Parliament detailed statements on

the funds paid for steadfastness over the past 15 years so that Parliament can be informed of the way these funds were spent and to whom they went.

He said that this is the demand of the largest sector of the masses in Jordan who now realise that a large section of these funds went to a group of people who spent it on their gambling in Europe and America and on their own pleasure and on building palaces and villas. He called on the government to question all those who amassed wealth to explain, and give account for their actions.

Ahmad Qutaish

Ahmad Qutaish (Madaba), a member of the financial committee of the House, said "the dangers facing us, especially the economic threats, can only be countered through Islam."

The deputy paid tribute to His Majesty King Hussein, who, he said, "had more vision and intelligence than those who wanted to continue our earlier way of life."

Qutaish called for building trust between the citizen and the government. "Because without this trust we will not be able to face the future."

Jordan should have adopted corrective economic measures years ago, he said. The government should cooperate with Parliament to clarify all facts and "punish all those responsible, even those who are still in office," he added.

Qutaish outlined several measures which, he said, could help address the economic situation. He called for reduced consumption and increased exports, but underlined the need to maintain support for the Kingdom's armed forces.

Issa Madanat

Issa Madanat (Karak) blamed past government's political and economic policies for the Kingdom's imbalance in spending between productive and non-productive sectors. "These governments overspent on service and infrastructure," he said. In addition, he said, there was a decrease in spending on productive projects.

He also blamed "external

forces, most prominent of which was the success of capitalist countries in exporting their products to developing countries" for the economic problem.

Madanat suggested that the budget address the country's problems through revamping the economic structure, solving the unemployment problem, curbing the rise in cost of living, and balancing foreign debt repayments.

He said there was a very large envisaged increase in "direct and indirect taxes" in the budget coupled with a reduction in investments and more focus on spending on infrastructure.

Marwan Al Himoud

Balqa's Deputy Marwan Al Himoud said that the general budget comes as a statement in numbers complementing the speech from the throne by His Majesty King Hussein and the government's programme. He said that the numbers in the budget imply the nature of the coming period and includes an evaluation for the past in its plans, programme and practices.

As deputies and legislative authority, Himoud said, we should admit that there are three pressing considerations that control our national march:

The first is that "Jordan is the solution" scheme which is a conspiracy that aims not only at Jordan, but also on the Palestinian issue and the Arab system as a whole. He said that "King Hussein's implications for this subject affirmed that Jordan is passing under pressure for its leading role in defending the land, people and problem of Palestine," and in defending Iraq in its war with Iran, and aimed at its democratic experience. Henceforth, he added, we should exert our efforts in supporting the Jordanian armed forces and the security establishment.

The second pressing issue is the rising cost of living to a limit that threatens the social security, Himoud said.

The third issue, he said, is establishing democracy not only verbally but as a way of thinking and a daily practice. He said that although it is the hardest job to achieve, it is self-immunity that

guarantees defending the homeland and the regime, while at the same time it guarantees the citizen's security, dignity and his voluntary contribution to this process.

Himoud said that the general budget is a general programme that the executive authority cannot achieve alone without the full commitment of the constitutional authorities, official and public institutions and the citizens. He said that reducing consumption, increasing savings and investment, reducing unemployment ratios and inflation and decreasing the deficit in the budget and the trade balance, and settling the exchange rates of the Jordanian dinar cannot be accompanied except by translating the national sense of pride into deeds.

Himoud said that the programme cannot be described only as economic since it has various scopes that deal with all walks of life. An example, he said, if it was a practical necessity for the reform process to reduce the deficit in the budget by increasing local revenues, the local revenues will increase simultaneously when the citizen views taxes as a duty, not as a burden.

Himoud recommended that the private sector be given an advanced role in the processes of building and investment. He said that it is time to discuss with the government a detailed programme to activate the role of the private sector.

Another issue raised by Himoud was the problem of water, which he said should be given priority. He warned of the shortage of water in the coming future and asked for holding studies to deal with this problem.

Himoud asked for reaching self-sufficiency in producing vegetables and fruits for local consumption and for exportation in order to adjust the balance of payments. He also asked for a solution for the problem of dependency on other countries in securing the national need of meat.

Himoud also raised Baqaa camp's problems, such as the inadequacy of health services and the United Nations' Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) procedures.

Fakhri Kavar
Bassam Haddadin
Theeb Marji

Deputies Fakhri Kavar, Bassam Haddadin and Theeb Marji jointly presented a paper in which they rejected the government's draft budget after backing their decision with measures they said the government failed to address. They praised the government's structural adjustment programme but said the draft budget failed to address the social impact of the economic crisis.

Despite the importance of cutting the budget deficit and adjusting the deficit in the balance of payments, the deputies said the draft budget "did not tackle important issues such as unemployment, the deterioration in living standards, the widening poverty and the decline in real terms of people's incomes."

The three deputies, who are members of the leftist "Democratic Bloc," said that corruption and mismanagement were "still embedded in our public life," and urged the government to take measures towards developing the judicial system to deal with all aspects of economic crime.

"The completion of the requirements of democratic transition by developing such laws would no doubt contribute to creating a more adequate environment for investment and production," the deputies said. The three Christian deputies said that the government's programme failed to mention basic

(Continued on page 7)

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Deputies demand establishing system of accountability, propose alternative courses to remedy economic ills

(Continued from page 6)

structural imbalances in the economy such as the weak production base and the predominance of the services sector, in addition to continued dependence on financial aid and external borrowing.

Kawar (Amman), Haddadin (Zarqa) and Marji (Irbid) said the finance minister's reference in the budget to increasing reliance on internal revenues was no more than "empty rhetoric," and called for the adoption of "a target figure for a gradual but decisive action to eliminate financial reliance on foreign countries, whether the reliance is in the form of debts or engagements that lead to aid."

The deputies said that low income Jordanians paid the price for the government's measures that halted further economic deterioration during 1989.

"Inflationary pressures increased after the 50 per cent devaluation of the dinar, salaries and fees were frozen while the cost of living increased much higher than the rate mentioned in the draft budget," they asserted, adding that price increases "reached almost 100 per cent."

"They said the government used provisional laws to impose taxation without waiting for Parliament's endorsement and that this taxation increased pressure on low income families."

"Talk about achieving social justice in this budget is a form of fiction," they said. "While some of the measures will lead to reducing the profitability of companies, and major capitalists, the majority of these measures and the general socio-economic policies will lead to escalating pressures on low and middle income citizens and to increasing the misery of an important sector of society."

Commenting on the government's five-year (1991-1995) structural adjustment programme, which they said was based on the programme worked out with the International Monetary Fund, the three deputies said this plan was designed by "technocrats who do not consider political and social implications."

"We still do not know whether this plan will be presented to Parliament for discussion and approval or will be drafted in closed offices."

They concluded that "since this budget emanates from the structural adjustment programme signed with the IMF, and since it is a continuation of the previous economic course... we find ourselves forced to declare our rejection of the course adopted in the draft budget for 1990, hoping that the government will offer, in the future, a budget that emanates from a new economic and political course that recognises the gravity of the crisis, our national interests and the interests of the struggling sector in society."

Taber Al Masri

Taber Al Masri (Amman) noted that the budget was prepared long time ago and it, as such, didn't reflect the changes which occurred during the last six months.

Al Masri said that the IMF economic structural adjustment programme envisages general terms leaving the specifics to the government's judgement and, therefore, he asked how the authorities were distributing the austerity measures fairly among the citizens.

He inquired about the policies that the government should take to spur the private sector to bolster the economy and regain confidence since the private sector was more qualified to do the task more efficiently.

The Amman deputy saw Jordan's prosperity in the services sector as it brings to Kingdom the much needed foreign exchange. He added that due to the fact that Jordan is mostly an importing country and input in industries require spending the hard currencies, the government should do its utmost to focus on bolstering the services sector and make Jordan a centre in this area.

In further comments, Al Masri said that the parliamentary finance committee failed to specify the amount of subsidies that would be required noting that it was unclear whether the subsidies would increase or decrease.

Masri also inquired about the revenues of gas produced from Al Rishah region which he neither found listed in the budget nor in the financial committee's report and asked Minister of Finance Basil Jaradah to present an explanation in this regard. He also reiterated his proposal "to annually link income tax law with the budget law so that percentage

of income tax will annually be dealt with in accordance with Jordan's economic situation."

Masri warned against any possible failures to properly invest the Social Security Corporation revenues which would place on the Jordanian economy heavy financial burden.

"Jordan's economic problems need long-term solutions so that a budget for a single year cannot find immediate solutions but rather be the start. I believe that if the government takes into consideration the financial committee's report and the constructive remarks deputies presented, then this will be the sound way towards solving Jordan's economic and financial problems," Masri continued.

Masri concluded by endorsing the 1990 draft budget.

Hamman Saad

Deputy Hamman Saad expressed reservations over the financial committee's decision to cut the Public Security Department's current expenditure allocations and spending on universities.

The Amman deputy argued that the draft budget did not constitute a "reform programme" and called on the government to restructure its philosophy and concept by rearranging its priorities to confront existing challenges and dangers.

Saad, a member of the "Islamic bloc" maintained that military spending and allocations for food security were necessary to "safeguard our existence."

"A financial strategy based on Islam would be appreciated by millions of our people," he told the house.

Dr. Mohammad Al Haj

Zarqa Deputy Dr. Mohammad Al Haj said that the budget's draft law "did not satisfy the people's desire to see Jordan transforming from a consuming market into a producing country."

He said that the capital expenditure in the budget form 31 per cent while the current expenditures form 69 per cent. This, he said, reflects the backwardness in development projects and plans when compared to expenditures in other fields. He said that this phenomenon in the budget law should be changed.

Saad Haddadin

Saad Haddadin (Madaba) said the country's economic problem was a "direct result of the lack of real allegiance to the homeland and the spirit of responsibility while adopting superficial policies."

Haddadin called for "redirecting our attention to our villages and rural areas and to agriculture to build a strong economy." He said investments and production should be increased and more employment opportunities should be created.

The Madaba deputy called for changing the present form of food subsidies since, he said, "they only serve the rich because poor families consume only limited quantities and utilise basic food-stuffs such as sugar and rice with care."

He opposed proposed cuts in allocations for the Public Security Department and said the department had a key role in ensuring security and stability and in protecting democracy in the country.

He called on all Arab countries designated as aid donors to Jordan under the 1979 Baghdad summit resolutions to honour their commitments in full to Jordan.

Atef Btoush

Deputy Atef Btoush said the draft budget should have included a political programme that can enhance the economic reform to enable the country face challenges.

He noted Israel's plan to absorb thousands of Soviet Jews into the occupied Arab territories.

"Israelis are intent on attracting more than 20 million Jews from all over the world. This requires expansion which will not be towards the sea, but towards the Arab World," Btoush said. "Whether it is a declared policy or not, we are targeted by the Israelis and, therefore, our budget should have reflected this challenge."

The Karak deputy urged the government to adopt a new approach that would achieve "military strength and production to protect us from threats."

He confirmed that military security must be coupled with social security "which can be achieved through well-studied



Abdul Rahim Akour

Deputy Abdul Rahim Akour said he was disappointed with the government's failure to address "humanitarian aspects" in the budget.

"If we are looking for the success of our development drive, it is necessary that we concentrate on human being as our first priority," Akour said. "Therefore, I do not think that Jordanians, who have been accustomed to consumerism will be able to change unless we move towards educating them how to abandon personal interests for the sake of the majority."

He observed that the budget focused on the role of the public sector without engaging "pockets of wealth in society who exploited the devaluation of the dinar to raise prices and make great profits."

Akour noted that while the cost of living increased by 27 per cent, incomes remained the same.

Salameh Ghwairi

Salameh Ghwairi of Zarqa criticised the draft budget for "failing to provide expected and adequate fund allocations" to governorates and districts.

"This means that some governorates will not enjoy any allocations at all in this budget, including the Governorate of Zarqa. The Zarqa Governorate's share of the gross expenditure, as proposed in the 1990 draft fiscal budget, does not commensurate with its huge size or population," Ghwairi said.

Turning to the large number of factories located in Zarqa Governorate, Ghwairi urged the government and Ministry of Industry and Trade in particular "to commit these factories to the duty of contributing to developing local environment and, furthermore, to launch a special charter that organises dealings between the administrations of these factories and the governorates' municipalities so as to promote our society," Ghwairi added.

Jamal Khreisha

Jamal Khreisha (Balqa) underlined the importance of protecting Jordan's national security as the foundations of Arab national security. "All of us should be aware of the threats and dangers facing us and work together," he said.

"National debt is a national cause of concern; unemployment and higher prices are national issues, therefore, the government has to find suitable solutions to these problems," he said.

He described the budget as "clear and objective."

"The Financial Committee's report on the budget was reasonable and balanced, therefore I agree with the Financial Committee's recommendation to merge some institutions and approve of the committee's recommendation to organise the budget according to regions," he said.

Jamal Shureih

Jamal Shureih said the budget "does not reflect the monetary reality of the government since it does not include the budgets of institutions such as Royal Jordanian, the Jordan Valley Authority etc." and I ask the government to present us with the

budgets of these institutions.

"The debt resulting from the military aid fund experiment, which we are now working to pay, is an experiment that should not be repeated and there is no need for secrecy in issues which pertain to the spending of the armed forces," he said.

"The budget indicated that tax revenues this year will reach JD 150 million, exceeding by far last year's JD 60 million and I hope that the tax department will not burden citizens with further taxes," he said.

He called for expanding the independence of the Central Bank of Jordan and a reconsideration of the policy of work permits for foreign labour with a view to limit incoming labour."

Saleem Zu'bi

Bani Kinana Deputy Saleem Zu'bi said that Jordan's financial and economic problems are represented in rocketing prices, unemployment, an increasing tax burden, foreign indebtedness, the slump in the dinar's rate of exchange, and the drop in gold and foreign exchange reserves.

Zu'bi said that it is impossible for the government to fulfil its promise to solve the economic crisis and at the same time shoulder the responsibility of repaying debts and interest. This, he said, creates doubts about the government's pledges to get out of the crisis.

"It was incumbent (on Jordan) to direct attention in the first place to writing off part of these debts before going into the process of rescheduling. This is based on objective and practical considerations including the rise in the dollar's rate of exchange against the dinar, which almost multiplied the size of these debts, and the fact that Jordan, with its limited resources and deteriorating economic situation, is incapable of paying its debts," Zu'bi added.

Zu'bi added that the financial committee's economic correction "is designed to increase the burdens of direct and indirect taxes... and to cut expenditure—such as freezing salaries and investment expenditures—in order to save enough funds needed to settle debt instalments even if this could be at the expense of a low standard of living and exhausting citizens with increasing taxes." Stressing that this plan will "further impoverish and starve citizens," Zu'bi said that solution lies in settling the problem of indebtedness.

"This cannot be done through scheduling or rescheduling of debts but rather through holding negotiations with the aim of writing off all or part of these debts. Jordan should conduct an internationally effective role in cooperation with a number of indebted countries to attain this objective," Zu'bi asserted.

He also called for eradicating symbols of corruption that inflicted damage on the national economy and underlined the need to restore funds smuggled outside Jordan.

Sultan Al Adwan

Sultan Al Adwan (Balqa) struck the cord of revenues by noting that most government income was from taxes, fees and licenses. He said it was dangerous that government earnings focus on these areas and should be expanded to include income from productive sectors and exports.

Nayef Al Hadid

Nayef Al Hadid (Amman) thanked the present and the past governments for stabilising the eco-

nomy and the Jordanian currency and for regaining the public confidence after a series of deterioration in remittances from expatriates and a decline in exports and investments. He urged the government to continue the policies of adjustments by publicising the necessary information to the people.

Al Hadid then turned to the Kingdom's indebtedness which he said it was far above the normal limit of \$3 billion for a country. He said that indebtedness in any country should not exceed 40 per cent of gross domestic product but in Jordan it was 300 per cent and, moreover, it exceeded \$2,000 per individual.

The Amman deputy suggested controlling and reducing the current expenditures through the following means:

- 1) Not to send delegations to attend conferences abroad and to delegate an ambassador or embassy staff to represent Jordan at such conferences. In very important cases, the government should not send abroad more than three representatives and for a period not exceeding one week.
- 2) Reduce the number of government parties and receptions to the bare minimum.
- 3) Cut the number of trainees which the government sends abroad.
- 4) Control the telephone expenses of high ranking officials.
- 5) Control the transport expenses of government vehicles.
- 6) Save JD 2 million annually by cancelling the Greater Amman Municipality and returning the counties surrounding Amman to their former status.
- 7) Give specialised Jordanian companies the engineering designs which, according to the budget, are valued at JD 8.5 million under "research and studies" titles.

Abdul Salam Freihat

Ajloun Deputy Abdul Salam Freihat said that Ajloun district did not get enough attention from successive officials in the govern-

ment. He said that Ajloun, which had its leading role in Jordan's past and was the administrative centre for all the regions in northern Jordan, is qualified to become a governorate.

Health services in Ajloun district, Freihat said, are of low levels and that the health situation is still deteriorating. He added that the concerned authorities had specified allocations for building a modern hospital in Ajloun district, and for the surprise of the people the concerned authority bought Al Eiman hospital which was founded 50 years ago by a foreign charitable society, without any change in its equipment or cadres.

Freihat said that nobody knows where or how allocations for the hospital and its equipment were spent.

Fawzi Tai'meh

Dr. Fawzi Tai'meh (Balqa) focused on the agricultural aspect of the economy by stressing the food security priority. He contended that food security was the key to break away from economic colonialism of world powers and its agencies such as the IMF and the World Bank.

The Balqa deputy said that the budget contained no emphasis on agricultural development, a situation which will keep Jordan a big spender on food imports and food subsidies.

Tai'meh disagreed with the recommendation of the financial committee to reduce the budget of Public Security Department.

He called for cutting expenses on government vehicles and for strict controls over all fixed assets in as much as fighting corruption on all levels. On the revenue side he said rich people should contribute more and that poor people should not financially pressed beyond their present hard conditions.

Finally Tai'meh stressed the urgent need to attain self-sufficiency by moving more towards productive enterprises.

Nawwaf Khawaldeh

Nawwaf Faris Khawaldeh (Ma'raq) chose the Audit Bureau as being the main guardian to public funds and the comptroller on government spending. As such, he urged giving the bureau all the power to play a major role in governing trends of efficiencies or corruption wherever they may be located.

Khawaldeh highlighted the suffering of citizens from the high cost of living and urged the government to brake inflation and adopt practical measures to reduce prices in general.

The Ma'raq deputy also called on the government to privatise some public institutions in the fields of transport and telecommunication.

Finally, Khawaldeh, noted that some government institutions rent their premises from the private sector at high cost and he recommended that the government should study this subject and consider building its own premises to be financed by the Social Security Corporation.

Abdullah Zreikat

Deputy Abdullah Zreikat told the House that the draft budget for 1990 was void of any solution for the existing unemployment problem which is being aggravated every day.

Zreikat called on the government to initiate new small productive projects in various parts of the country especially in the rural areas and the badia, to help find work for the people and to stop the movement of people from the country to cities.

Zreikat also called on the government to tighten control on the labour market in Jordan and to substitute foreign and non-Jordanian Arab workers with local people who can do the job and earn a living.

The deputy criticised former economic planners for ruining the national economy and said that

Jordan's image abroad has become distorted and blurred as a result of the actions of those responsible for planning and the economy.

Zreikat called on the government to come to the aid of the needy groups in society to help them face soaring prices and the high cost of living. For this to happen, he said, tighter control should be clamped on merchants especially those dealing with food supplies.

In addition, he demanded that the government start looking seriously for new areas abroad where Jordanians can be employed.

Zreikat criticised the draft budget for giving more attention to capital expenditure rather than development projects. He said that the budget did not present a comprehensive and integrated national plan that can help end the economic crisis in Jordan.

Hisham Sharari

Deputy Hisham Sharari of Ma'an Governorate expressed some reservations about the financial committee report. He enquired about the proposal to merge the Agricultural Credit Corporation with the Cooperative Organisation when the latter is a private institution.

"How come we demand cutting budgets of universities while we demand enrollment of larger numbers of students... and how come we demand cutting budget of the Public Security Department at a time we concentrate on bolstering the security organ and raising its efficiency to protect citizens?" Sharari asked.

He also called for restructuring the Aqaba Region Authority so that it would become a centre for "planning and executing all programmes and development plans in southern district."

Sharari also criticised proposal to cut municipalities' budgets stressing that "this will have adverse effect on municipalities and citizens as well."

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Egypt increases oil pipeline transit tolls, plans expansion

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — Officials have increased by one-fourth the cost of sending oil through an overland pipeline skirting the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean Sea and plan a 50 per cent expansion of its capacity.

Chairman Ibrahim Hamza of the Arab Petroleum Pipelines Co., which owns the facility known as Sumed, did not specify when the higher transit tolls were implemented. But he said they will last "until the end of December", implying a review afterward.

Effective Jan. 1, transit tolls for the canal north of Suez's eastern mouth on the Gulf of Suez increased by up to 7.3 per cent. At the same time, the Suez Canal Authority's chairman, Ezzat Adel, announced a discount scheme for super-tankers that use the pipeline in conjunction with canal transit.

The government's Middle East News Agency quoted Sumed's Hamza as saying the new pipeline toll is \$2.55 a ton.

Sumed officials in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria

told the Associated Press the old tolls for crude oil going through the 336-kilometre double pipeline were \$1.70 to 2.20 a ton, depending on the type of crude. This meant an average of almost \$2 a ton.

Hamza did not give the new minimum and maximum tolls. His figure of \$2.55 a ton apparently represented the average new rate.

He said the increase decision "was taken in the light of economic studies, world oil market forecasts and the economics of operating tankers."

The news agency quoted him as saying that more than 50 per cent of Arab oil from producers in the Gulf destined for Europe went through Sumed last year. In all, 36 types of Arab crude oil move through it, he said.

The pipeline runs from Ain

Sukhna, 54 kilometres south of Suez, across the Eastern Desert to a point just south of Cairo. There it turns northwest to Sidi Kreir on the Mediterranean coast, 27 kilometres west of Alexandria.

Hamza said Egypt's oil minister, Abdul Hady Kandil, has approved a project to raise the pipeline's annual capacity from the present 30 million tons to 120 million tons.

The Egyptian government owns 50 per cent of company shares and almost all its personnel are Egyptians. Each of the governments of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates has 15 per cent of shares and Qatar 5 per cent.

When the line began operating in 1977, its capacity was 40 million tons annually. That was doubled shortly afterward.

Because the Suez Canal accommodates ships with drafts no deeper than 16 metres, the pipeline enables super-tankers too large for a loaded canal transit to unload at Ain Sukhna. The oil is pumped through the 1.05-metre

pipes to Sidi Kreir, where it is picked up by other tankers or by the original super-tanker after transiting the canal empty or with a reduced load.

Hamza said Sumed has turned Sidi Kreir into "a world oil trading centre for the national companies of the Gulf states. Some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, are posting oil prices as delivered at Sidi Kreir."

The Ain Sukhna and Sidi Kreir terminals have 13 storage tanks each, and an additional two under construction at each end, Sumed officials said. Each tank's capacity is about 85,000 tons.

Based on a feasibility study, Sumed's expanded capacity will be achieved by building a station halfway along the pipeline just south of Cairo to boost pumping. Hamza said \$90 million have been appropriated for the station but did not say when construction will begin or when the expansion project will be completed.

Egypt gets 27.5 per cent of pipeline revenues in transit royalties plus 50 per cent of net profit under the shareholding agreement.

S. Arabia to export gold, silver soon

JEDDAH (AP) — Saudi Arabia, the world's leading oil exporter and possessing a quarter of global oil reserves, will soon start exporting gold, silver and other precious metals, officials said Saturday.

The exports will be from the Sukhaybarat mine which lies 300 kilometres east of the city of Medina on the Red Sea, and are scheduled to start early 1991 at a rate of 1,500 kilograms a year.

The Saudi Company for Precious Metals (SCPM), a 50-50 Saudi-Swedish joint venture running the project with a capital of 103 million riyals (\$25 million), disclosed the export plans as it invited tenders for the setup of a

four-megawatt-capacity power plant as part of the needed utilities. Feb. 3 is the deadline for bids.

The gold will be shipped overseas by air to be sold on the basis of competitive bids to refineries in Europe and the Far East, company officials said.

The kingdom claims an ancient gold mining area running in a crescent-shaped seam on its western coast, with some saying it was once King Solomon's legendary mines. From time to time it tried to revive the pits, but a serious effort began only in 1983.

The first modern gold mine is at Mahd Ad-Dahab area, south-west of Medina, estimated to

have reserves of 1.1 million tons of gold ore. Sukhaybarat has reserves of approximately 8.4 million tons of ore, giving the project a life span of 13 years, according to company statistics.

SCPM says a number of interesting prospects have been identified in the vicinity of Mahd Ad-Dahab and that exploration work is already planned for assessing their potential.

SCPM was set up in 1988 by the General Petroleum and Mineral Organisation, or PetroMin, and Boliden of Sweden mainly to exploit gold and other metals at the Sukhaybarat area. Boliden, a member of Trelleborg Group, has developed and operated ab-

out 50 mines in Sweden and other countries since it was established in 1925.

But the Sukhaybarat project dates back to 1983 when PetroMin and Boliden together began exploration work which proved that gold was available in commercial quantities.

The exploratory drilling revealed that gold ore not only occurred in the previously mined quartz veins but also in granodiorite intrusions associated with them.

The ore body is so close to the surface that open pit mining methods could be used instead of much more complicated underground mining methods, the officials said.

Iraqi economist criticises budget

BAGHDAD (AP) — A top Iraqi economist Saturday criticised the state budget for 1990 as being incapable of boosting growth or curbing inflation — the two main targets set by the government.

Professor Humam Al Shammaa wrote in the daily Al Qadissiyya that heavy reliance on deficit financing and an insistence on boosting profits of state-run industries were bound to push inflation higher.

"From details of the budget released so far, it is obvious that no reconciliation can be achieved between the targets of combating inflation, and economic growth," Al Shammaa wrote.

The article in Al Qadissiyya, which is the newspaper of the Iraqi armed forces, was an unusual case of an officially tolerated criticism of basic government policy.

In other recent signs of a mea-

sured opening of public life in tightly controlled Iraq, the government recently lifted a ban on foreign travel by Iraqis.

The government has not provided full budget figures, but it has released — for the first time in years — some of the allocation totals for particular sectors.

Iraq's deputy prime minister for economic affairs, Sadoun Hamadi, said earlier this month the main objective of the budget was to curb inflation, conservatively estimated at 40 per cent annually.

Hamadi said the government would seek to accelerate economic development, supply more basic goods, maintain the needs of the army and oil foreign debts.

But Al-Shammaa said the government's reliance on printing more money to cope with the budget deficit, as well as expected

increases in the prices of goods sold by the government-owned enterprises, will lead to skyrocketing inflation.

He also criticised a government system that allows Iraqis to import whatever goods they want from abroad by using their savings abroad, as one more factor that would increase inflation.

Most of the goods imported now by using this facility are paid for with Iraqi dinars smuggled to neighbouring countries such as Kuwait, Jordan and Turkey.

Iraq is expected to make about \$18 billion from its oil exports in 1990.

Al Shammaa also criticised the government's economic plan for setting the curbing of inflation as its top priority.

"It would rather put paying foreign debts as the first priority, accelerating economic growth as

second, and then other objectives," he wrote.

Iraq's foreign debt is estimated at \$25-\$30 billion.

That does not include an estimated \$30-\$35 billion provided by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states to prop up Iraq's economy during the eight-year Gulf war. Economists believe the Saudis and their partners will write that off.

Iraq suspended payments on much of its foreign debt during the war. Since the ceasefire it has been negotiating individually with its creditors to reschedule debt.

The government has announced its intention to seek medium and long-term credit. Iraq announced earlier this month it plans to pay off \$3 billion of its debt this year and stop all costly short-term borrowing.

Gas windfall puts Qatar at 'get-rich-quick' crossroads

DOHA (R) — Sitting on top of the world's biggest natural gas field, the sparsely populated Gulf emirate of Qatar is trying to decide how to get rich quick.

The huge gas field stretching out under the shallow waters of the Gulf towards Iran should power and bankroll the emirate into the next century.

But decisions on what industries to set up and when and where to sell the gas are proving troublesome for Qatar's policy-makers.

"The decisions...in the coming six months will effect Qatar for the next 20 to 30 years," one financial analyst said.

Among projects being considered are expanding a fertiliser manufacturing complex, building an ethylene and polythene plant, setting up a ferro-alloy complex and establishing an aluminium smelter.

After four years of recession, higher oil prices — oil brings in 90 per cent of the emirate's income — and the development of the North Field hold the promise of better times.

Bankers estimate Qatar's oil earnings at around \$2 billion last year, nearly a third higher than estimated.

Despite the recession, development of Qatar's infrastructure has continued apace — albeit some of it at the expense of local contractors — and private housing complexes have mushroomed around Doha where most of the 300,000 population live.

Modern roads and flyovers snake around the capital's marble and glass skyscrapers in stark contrast to the barren deserts which sweep across the rest of the country.

The gas field represents money in the bank for Qatar but oil industry executives in Doha fear delays in decision-making could set back the country's development.

"There are so many projects waiting in the pipeline to be decided and the gas will be here next year," a bank executive in Doha said.

"If we miss the boat now, it will take years to reach the same point," one oil industry analyst

said. Financial analysts and bankers in Qatar believe the emirate's new cabinet, formed last year, will have a more pragmatic approach to the pressing economic decision-making than the old guard it replaced.

Qatar was in deficit for four years after the oil price collapse in 1986. Due to strict government expenditure control and cuts in project spending, the actual gap was small, bankers said.

The emirate's 1989/90 budget, which runs from April to March had a 5.6 billion riyal (\$1.5 billion) deficit, compared to 6.1 billion riyals (\$1.67 billion) the year before.

One controversial method of controlling spending was delaying payments to local contractors for up to a year — financial sources said this helped to slow the economy and prevented high inflation.

But increasing oil revenues and government borrowing now meant Qatar would be able to reduce the deferred payment period to three months and eventually lift it completely.

Alba seeks \$560m loan

BAHRAIN (R) — Aluminium Bahrain BSC (Alba) has asked a consortium of banks led by Bahrain's Arab Banking Corporation (ABC) and Kuwait-based Gulf Investment Corporation (GIC) to arrange a \$560 million loan, bankers have said.

The 10-year facility, the biggest commercial loan in the Gulf for several years, is the first part of \$1.4 billion expansion that will more than double the smelter's capacity to 465,000 tonnes per year.

Bankers said details of the loan package would be finalised in the next few days and other international banks invited to join afterwards. The loan would probably be signed before the holy month of Ramadan begins in late March.

Two other consortia, one led by Bahrain's Gulf International Bank and London-based Chase Investment Bank and the other by Citibank, had competed for the mandate to arrange the loan.

The ABC consortium includes Manufacturers Hanover, Arab Bank Limited, Riyadh Bank, National Commercial Bank, Bank of Tokyo, Industrial Bank of Japan, Mitsubishi Bank and Sumitomo Bank.

OECD: Turkey must cut spending

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkey must cut state spending before it can bring down its high inflation rate, predicted more than 60 per cent in 1990, the OECD said.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said in its latest annual report that inflation would continue to plague Turkey due to large public deficits, supply restraints and a lack of productive investments.

The Paris-based "think-tank" for 24 nations predicted that consumer prices would rise by 63 per cent this year, compared with 69 per cent in 1989 and 75 per cent in 1988.

"Further steps to limit the central government's access to central bank financing would help to

curtail the most important source of structural inflation," it said in the report.

"Announcements of monetary targets appear to be indispensable to... achieve compatibility between fiscal and monetary policies," it noted.

For the first time in Turkey's 66-year-old history, the central bank this month announced a deflationary monetary plan. It also made clear that monetary targets could succeed only if supported by fiscal and economic policies.

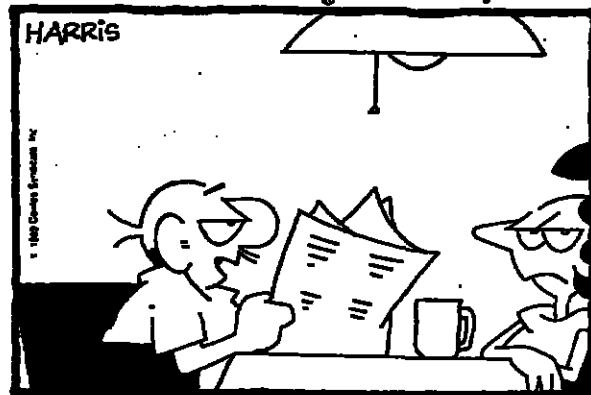
The OECD said the structural reform process launched in 1980, helping export-led growth and curbing the acute hard currency shortage of the late 1970s, was far from complete.

It also questioned whether the present mix of policies would gradually reduce the inflation rate and it warned that any further increases in inflation could endanger the targets of a new

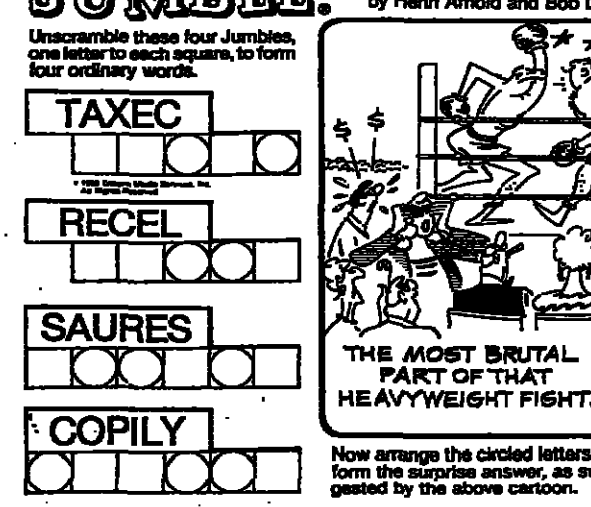
five-year development plan.

It predicted growth of the real gross national product (GNP) would recover in 1990, helped by a return to normal levels of farm output.

THE BETTER HALF. By Harris



JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME



OTS to take action against Bush's son

WASHINGTON (R) — The regulator of the U.S. savings industry, rocked by a scandal estimated to cost American taxpayers more than \$150 billion, will take administrative action against President George Bush's son, Neil, charging conflict of interests in decisions he made as a director of failed savings institution in Colorado.

The Office of Thrift Supervision (OTS) said it would seek a cease and desist order against Bush, a former director of Silverado Banking, Savings and Loan Association in Denver, which was seized by the government in December 1988.

The order, a less severe sanction than the agency has imposed against other former Silverado

officials, would direct Bush not to engage in any further conflict of interest, should he ever work at a federally-insured savings institution.

The OTS said it decided to seek the administrative action against the president's son after he announced that he had broken off negotiations with the agency, which had been going on for several weeks.

Silverado is one of hundreds of savings institutions whose failures over the past several years prompted a \$159 billion bailout law signed by President Bush last August. At least 200 institutions are expected to become insolvent in the months ahead in addition to the more than 300 that have already been seized, sold or li-

quidated by the U.S. government since August.

To win the cease and desist order, the matter must be heard by an OTS administrative law judge in a process that could take up to a year to complete. If Bush loses, he could appeal.

Bush, 35, one of the president's four sons and owner of an oil and exploration firm in Denver, has denied any wrongdoing in connection with his role as a Silverado director.

He resigned his post in August 1988, two weeks after his father received the Republican presidential nomination.

Five other former Silverado officials have agreed to OTS orders during the past few weeks that effectively bar them from the

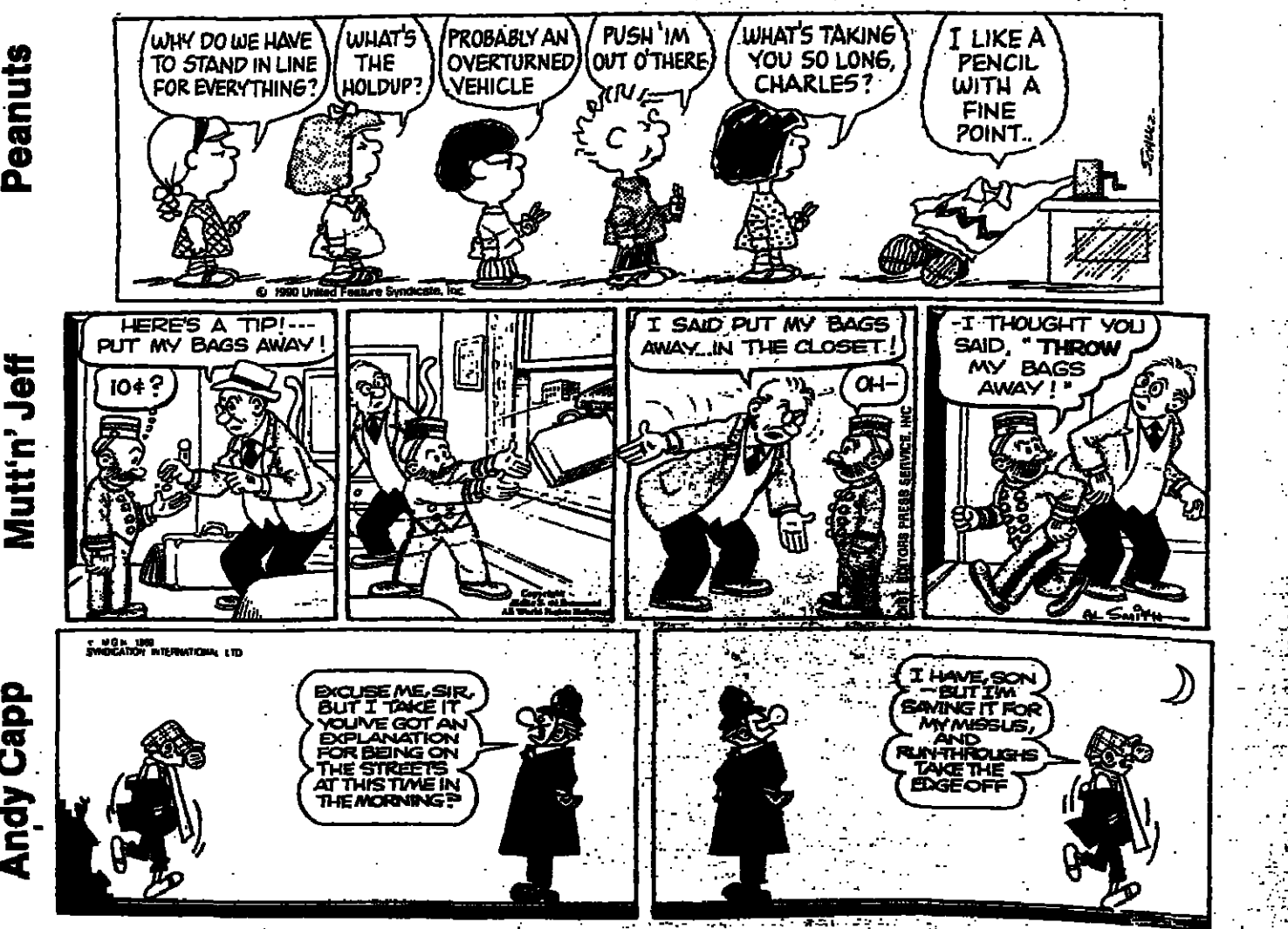
savings and loan and banking business.

Experts and regulators have cited fraud and mismanagement by savings and loan executives as major factors behind the industry's crisis.

The government seized control of Silverado in December 1988 and subsequently sold it to First Nationwide Financial Corporation. Estimates of the cost of the failure to U.S. taxpayers range as high as \$1.6 billion.

The OTS has been investigating charges that Bush took part in decisions to approve loans to businesses associates.

It said its examiners found Silverado managers were deficient in assessing the creditworthiness of borrowers.



ECONOMIC NEWS BRIEFS

Poles to set up private bank

WARSAW (R) — A Polish businessman has announced plans to set up the first private bank in Poland since World War II. Aleksander Gawronik, owner of a network of foreign exchange bureaux in the West of the country, told a news conference he had received initial permission from the central bank, the National Bank of Poland. He said he expected the finance ministry's approval in the next few days to set up the Poznan Bank-A.G. Co. in the western city of Poznan and hoped to start operations within two months. He said he had put up initial capital of more than 4.5 billion zloties (\$470,000) in the bank which would start by issuing short-term credits to enterprises and would also deal with private customers.

Peugeot, Renault agree to cooperate

PARIS (R) — French carmakers Peugeot and Renault have agreed to begin a joint 1.2 billion franc (\$210 million) research programme to cut pollution from cars. Topics to be studied include reduction of carbon monoxide emissions from conventional petrol engines, alternative fuels such as hydrogen, and electric drive systems. The government would contribute between 450 million and 500 million francs (\$79 million and \$88 million), Industry Minister Roger Fauroux told a news conference.

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

Sunday, January 28, 1990.
Central Bank official rates

	Buy	Sell	French franc	Japanese yen (for 100)	115.6	116.2
U.S. dollar	659.0	665.0	Dutch guilder	461.1	463.7	
Pound Sterling	1096.7	1107.7	Swedish crown	246.9	330.4	
Deutsche mark	350.6	354.5	Italian lire (for 100)	106.8	107.9	
Swiss franc	441.8	446.2	Belgian franc (for 10)	32.5	33.8	
				106.7	108.6	

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Christie almost matches world record

AUCKLAND, New Zealand (AP) — Linford Christie fired an early-season warning shot to rivals across the world Sunday with a stunning 9.93 seconds, 100th of a second outside Carl Lewis's world record, to win the 100 metres at the Commonwealth Games.

The time will not be recognised officially due to a tailwind of 3.83 metres per second, almost twice above the legal limit. But the Englishman was nevertheless de-

lighted. "I'm really pleased," Christie said after bettering his semifinal time of 10.02 seconds that was the fastest he had run since the 1988 Seoul Olympics when he set a European record of 9.97 seconds. "I've been training really hard. The crowd here is absolutely brilliant. Everything was on my side."

Ray Stewart, world ranked number one last year, failed to make the final. The Jamaican

said he had only been training for three weeks following a thigh injury.

"I knew I didn't have a chance of winning the final so why push too hard," Stewart said.

Merlene Ottey of Jamaica also clocked an outstandingly fast time of 11.02 seconds to win the women's 100-metre title, but when she ran down the home straight at the Mt. Smart Stadium, the wind was even stronger, registering 4.37 metres per second on the trackside measuring gauge.

Despite the wind assistance, the performances of Christie and Ottey stood out on a busy day of track and field in which seven other gold medals were decided.

Colin Jackson of Wales, ranked second in the world behind American Roger Kingdom, won the gold medal in the 110 metres hurdles in a European and Commonwealth record time of 13.08 seconds when the wind was inside

the limit. Darren Clark of Australia, who ran the fastest time clocked by a 17-year-old back in 1983, won his first major championship title after years of injuries and near-misses.

He clocked 44.60 seconds in the 400 metres and received a standing ovation.

The 3,000 metres steeplechase produced Kenya's first gold as Olympic champion Julius Kariuki came home to win easily from teammate Joshua Kipkemboi. Angela Chalmers of Canada won the women's 3,000 metres.

Jane Flemming, who only was included in the Australian team a week before the games, won the heptathlon gold.

There was an emotion-filled performance in the pool, where 15-year-old sensation Hayley Lewis had a test day in her quest for a record six women's swimming gold medals.

Lendl wins Australian Open men's title

MELBOURNE (AP) — An Australian Open marred by injuries and John McEnroe's stormy exit ended on a sour note Sunday as Ivan Lendl repeated as men's champion when Stefan Edberg quit with a torn stomach muscle.

It was the first time in the Australian Open's 85-year history that a men's finalist quit in the middle of a match.

Lendl led 4-6, 7-6 (7-3), 5-2 when Edberg told the umpire he could not continue his match.

Edberg said he hurt himself in the last service game of his semifinal victory over fellow Swede Mats Wilander. Edberg, who has had strained abdominal muscles several times in the past, felt the pain from the start of Sunday's match.

"It kept getting worse and worse," he said. "I could only serve at 75 per cent. That wasn't working too well. I was struggling from the beginning. It didn't feel right, and once it gets into your head, it becomes psychological. And if you continue, you can only make your muscle worse."

Dr. David Bolzonello, the tournament physician, said Edberg suffered abdominal strain on his left side.

"That's where he pulls through on his service motion, I advised him a minimum of two weeks rest," the doctor said. "I think he made the right decision by not progressing. I think he would have made it worse."

West German Steffi Graf beat 18-year-old American Mary Joe Fernandez for the women's title Saturday.

Czechoslovak Helena Sukova and Jana Novotna won the women's doubles Saturday, beating Fernandez and partner Patty Fendick in two tiebreakers, capping a two-week tournament that had been plagued by problems.

Women's second seed Gabriela Sabatini and Australia's Mark Woodforde were forced from their third round matches with

sprained ankles. McEnroe was thrown out from his fourth-round match for starting at a lineswoman, swearing at the umpire and cracking a racket.

Edberg received massage by a trainer and put ice on his stomach during the final and rubbed his sore muscles several times during changeovers.

"It's not the greatest feeling to win in this way," said Lendl, a Czechoslovak who lives in the United States. "I hope Stefan recovers soon. It's unfortunate, but sometimes things happen this way. He came on for quite a while and showed great courage. I hope we can come back 12 months from now and slug it out till the end."

Lendl said that despite the result, "a win is a win. Five to 10 years from now, not too many people will remember" that he won by an injury. "It doesn't feel as great as if I had won it fair and square."

Lendl, who received the \$200,000 top prize, said he was surprised that Edberg came out to play knowing he was injured. Edberg received \$100,000.

Once Lendl realised that Edberg was hurt, he said he told himself, "hang in there and make him play every point. An injury like that gets worse the longer you play."

The only other finalist to retire in mid-match in grand slam history was H. Roper Barrett, who quit after four sets against Anthony Wilding at Wimbledon in 1911.

Edberg, who was forced to retire from the Australian Open with a back injury last year after winning in the round of 16, was in obvious pain from the middle of the second set on.

The trainer worked on him after the fifth game of the second set, when Edberg took advantage of four errors to break Lendl and put the set back on serve at 3-2. Edberg held serve and pushed

the set to a tiebreaker when he came back from 15-40 in the 12th game.

But after Edberg took the first two points of the tiebreaker, Lendl won the next six, including one on a double-fault by Edberg, and took the set with a backhand passing shot that whizzed down the line.

Edberg double-faulted on the last two points to suffer a break in the opening game of the third set. He fought back from three break points in the third game to hold after five deuces. But the injury was clearly slowing him and draining him.

Lendl played well, but not as crisply as he did earlier in the tournament and might not have beaten a healthier Edberg.

Lendl hit an unusually high 17 backhand errors in the first set, 16 in the second set and 10 in the abbreviated third set. His total of 67 errors compared to 56 by Edberg.

"If I thought I had a chance to win the second set, maybe I could have worked my way through winning the third set," Edberg said.

But after dropping the tiebreaker, Edberg said he "knew there was no way I could finish the match."

Lendl, who started a fad among the other players when he wore a French foreign legion-style hat for sun protection in previous matches, came out harrassed on a cool, overcast day.

Edberg, one of the quieter players on the tour, had one of more boisterous cheering sections as shirtless Swedish men with one letter each of his name written on their chests led cheers for him.

Edberg, broken the first time he served against Lendl, certainly didn't look as though he had any weaknesses in his 6-1, 6-1, 6-2 semifinals victory over Wilander.

Edberg laughed when asked about the turning point in that



Ivan Lendl

match. "The first point," he said with a smile, adding that he had "one of those days where I almost played perfect tennis."

Lendl might have given the same answer about his 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 victory over Frenchman Yannick Noah.

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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

- Q.1—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠ 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ Pass 4 ♠ Pass
What do you bid now?
A.—You have excellent support for partner's first suit, but that doesn't entitle you to go wild. Since these values were already taken into account when you made your two-over-one response, a bid of two hearts now does your hand full justice.
- Q.2—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠ 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ Pass 4 ♠ Pass
What action do you take?
A.—Since partner bid freely, he must have a better-than-minimum opening. You have a reasonably good five-card suit which should be a source of tricks, and a smattering of values elsewhere. Invite game by raising to two no trump.
- Q.3—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ Pass 4 ♠ Pass
What do you bid now?
A.—In support of spades your hand is worth 14 points, so you want to be in game. The way to do that is, strangely enough, to bid four spades! A jump to three spades these days is only invitational.
- Q.4—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠ 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ Pass 4 ♠ Pass
What do you bid now?
A.—You have excellent support for partner's suit, but there's really no point in revealing it. There are not too many tricks to be had, and even 11 tricks could be beyond your combined resources. Since you have a balanced hand and partner has announced one too, bid three no trump.
- Q.5—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠ 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 ♠ K 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass 3 ♠ Pass 4 ♠ Pass
What do you bid now?
A.—You have excellent support for partner's suit, but there's really no point in revealing it. There are not too many tricks to be had, and even 11 tricks could be beyond your combined resources. Since you have a balanced hand and partner has announced one too, bid three no trump.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY JANUARY 29, 1990

By Thomas S. Pearson, Astrologer, Carroll Wright Foundation
GENERAL TENDENCIES: This is a day and evening when you will have a strong tendency to feel that everything is going to be exactly the way you want it to be. Others will want to be in your company.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Advance your interests. Your home now should be the centre for a professional gathering.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) A good time to obtain necessary outside information for your usual activities. Do everything possible now to get your home in the best possible condition.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You have so many good, inspired ideas for your activities that you hardly know where to start. Show attachment in a direct manner that you understand their needs.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You are able to do something special now that will greatly delight a friend. You can be happy at home by expressing your own poised harmony.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Now a progressive expert gives you the lowdown for increasing your money. Do not let an outsider affect your relations with your mate.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Take as many jaunts to interesting places as possible with good friends. Follow your heart and not your head in dealing with your attachment.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Delays in arrival of one from a distance brings chance to be with other close friends. Take your own plan with you to places of amusement and have a good time.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You can use an unusual situation at your activities to greatly advance your interests.

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COMING TO AMERICA



Performances: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30

Cinema **CONCORD** Tel: 677420

WHAT GUYS?

(Arabic)



Performances: 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:30

Cinema **PHILADELPHIA** Tel: 634144

MY SISTER

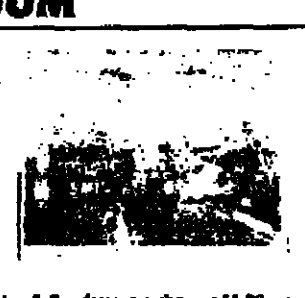
(Arabic)



Performances: 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:30

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SUMMER JOB



Performances: 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:30



Demonstrators in Bucharest, Romania, defy a government ban to protest against the ruling National Salvation Front.

Srinagar curfew eased; residents stock supplies

SRINAGAR (Agencies) — Srinagar residents poured from their homes Sunday to stock up on food and medicine when government troops briefly lifted a curfew intended to stifle a rebellion by separatists.

At least 72 people, mostly protesters defying the curfew, have been killed since it was imposed Jan. 20.

Occasional gunshots, four or five at a time, were heard. But there was no reports of new casualties during the six-hour curfew break.

The 24-hour curfew was imposed in a campaign to quell escalating violence by militants who want Kashmir to secede from predominantly Hindu India and become independent or join neighbouring and Islamic Pakistan.

Private vehicles were allowed onto streets for the first time Sunday since the crackdown, but motorcycles were not allowed to carry riders. Four unarmed air force officers waiting outdoors were killed Thursday by motorcycle gunmen.

State government officials have said repeatedly the situation is under control and the civil administration is still running the government, despite the military presence and rigidly enforced curfew.

Residents disputed the report. "The situation is very bad," said one Muslim, an employee of the state government, who

decline identification. The curfew, intended to confine people to their homes, was lifted at 5 a.m. (2330 GMT Saturday) and reimposed at 11 a.m. (0530 GMT Sunday).

People loaded up on potatoes and onions, but there were few green vegetables and no meat. Little fresh produce has reached this city of one million people since the crackdown.

Residents said the separatists had warned shopkeepers not to sell meat, because the troop deployment in the city was "sign of sorrow" and people should not enjoy themselves by feasting on meat.

Traffic police directed cars and three-wheeled motorbikes at intersections while heavily armed soldiers and paramilitary troops patrolled on foot and in trucks.

Foreign correspondents were expelled Sunday from Kashmir. "For reasons of state security you are to leave Jammu and Kashmir immediately," said a written notice from District Magistrate G.H. Abbas handed to non-Indian reporters for foreign media at Srinagar's main hotel.

The order was issued later Saturday as India launched a diplomatic offensive to persuade the superpowers and Muslim states that Pakistan is fuelling Islamic militancy in Jammu and Kashmir state.

Pakistan, which has fought two

Wars with India over Kashmir since 1947, denies the charge, saying the unrest is due to Delhi's refusal to hold a referendum on Kashmir's future.

Seven foreign correspondents flew out of Srinagar Sunday.

Most telephone connections were severed to the hotel where Indian and foreign journalists have been staying, and staffers at the central telegraph office said they had been ordered not to transmit news dispatches.

Maulvi Mohammad Farooq, a top Muslim cleric as spiritual leader at Srinagar's leading mosque, appealed to the United Nations to search for a solution.

He issued a statement Sunday claiming civil authorities had "handed over the city to the army, frustrating the people by curfew restrictions and massacre of innocent people... night raids, large-scale arrests, curbing the freedom of the press."

The crackdown is the first major crisis besetting the eight-week-old government of Prime Minister V.P. Singh.

It followed the escalation of attacks by the separatists on government patrols and buildings and the kidnapping in Srinagar of Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's youngest daughter.

Rubaiya Saeed, a medical student, was freed unharmed when the government released five jailed members of the Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front.

Romania parties seek power-sharing deal

BUCHAREST (R) — Romania's leading opposition parties, saying they wanted to avoid the threat of civil war, called on the government Sunday to share power.

Spokesman Ioan Lup read a joint statement over state radio as some 6,000 party supporters and a similar number backing the ruling National Salvation Front (NSF) converged on a square outside the front's headquarters in tense but peaceful rivalry.

The parties say the front, which took over last month after the fall and execution of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, is monopolising power and should share it with them in the run-up to elections called for May 20.

President Ion Iliescu and Prime Minister Petre Roman went on television late Saturday to offer some concessions, but the parties' spokesman said they were ambiguous and did not go far enough. "We don't want civil war, we want civilised discussions so that we can achieve peace and tranquillity to work and live better than hitherto," Lup said.

He acknowledged the parties' rally was unauthorised but said it was not intended to lead to violence. He urged Iliescu to take measures to avoid fights between the rival demonstrators on Victor's Square.

Lup said Roman and Iliescu had agreed that representatives of the three opposition parties — the National Peasants' Party, the

National Liberals and the Social Democrats — should meet them for talks, which follow an earlier session Saturday.

He said the parties wanted "to establish the fact that the front will give up (sole) power with the formation of a joint council of national unity on which members of all parties would be represented."

The front, whose supporters claim sole credit for the uprising against Ceausescu, has so far refused such a council.

It has also outraged the opposition by going back on previous promises to stand down after the elections, and has said it will field its own candidates in the poll.

In Victor's Square, troops, tanks and armoured personnel carriers guarded the front headquarters, which also houses Romania's Foreign Ministry, and reinforcements were rushed into place.

Both groups of demonstrators, their numbers far smaller than expected, seemed determined but peaceable, police kept a low profile.

"We are going to sit here until Iliescu resigns," said one party supporter. "Prepare the helicopter."

This was a reference to the helicopter which whisked Ceausescu away from central Bucharest Dec. 22, the night of his overthrow.

Rebel Communists form new party in Poland

WARSAW (R) — More than 100 rebel Communists formed a breakaway Social Democratic Union Sunday, plunging Poland's former ruling party into chaos as it tried to form a new leftist party of its own.

Tadeusz Fiszbach, a prominent reformer, walked out in disgust from a Communist congress late Saturday but returned Sunday to tell the 1,500 delegates he had set up the Union of Social Democracy of the republic.

He made the announcement after the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP), crushed by the Solidarity movement in elections last June and ousted from power in September, failed to disband Saturday as planned.

Instead, delegates voted to form a new party before dissolving the old one and began a founding congress to establish it. The rebels dismissed the move as a trick to keep progressives and hardliners together in a monolithic party little different from the PUWP.

"We can change programmatic statutes and the name of the party but only if we change the people can be credible," Fiszbach, 54, told the congress Sunday. "A neo-PUWP party has no social chances and no credibility."

"You can't mix fire and water. You can't be a social democrat today when this is what you were fighting against yesterday," he said.

Delegates sat in silence as the softly spoken Fiszbach, bald and bespectacled, accused the Communists of leading Poland into

economic and political crisis after they were installed by Soviet troops after World War II. He received little applause.

More than 100 people, had signed up with his breakaway group and several hundred more could follow suit, he said.

Fiszbach has the declared support of Lech Walesa. He won the Solidarity chairman's trust when, as Gdansk party chief in 1980-81, he helped negotiate the accords which led to the free trade union's creation in 1980.

But he denied he was servile to Solidarity and said: "I have my principles and I will not change them."

Fiszbach, deputy speaker in the Sejm (parliament), could hold a trump card because many of the 168 PUWP parliamentary deputies are likely to side with him rather than be associated with a neo-PUWP that has no chance of winning elections.

Foreign Trade Minister Marcin Swiecicki, one of four Communists in the Solidarity-led government, walked out of the congress with the rebels Saturday night and declared himself a non-party member.

He objected to the decision not to dissolve the PUWP immediately which party leaders said was to allow it to pass on its property to the new party before disbanding.

The fate of the PUWP's property empire — valued by the party at more than \$70 million — has sparked a major controversy. Right-wing parliamentary deputies failed last week to push through a bill confiscating

C8 LUMN

Borg in court

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Ex-tennis star Bjorn Borg appeared in court in his second legal battle in two weeks, launching a libel action arising from allegations that he abused drugs. A preliminary hearing involved Borg's suing the Swedish magazine "Z" for \$600,000 for quoting his ex-girlfriend, Jannike Bjorling, as saying he used cocaine. The magazine's lawyer, Peter Danowsky, told the district court that "Z" had heard from other sources that Borg used cocaine before speaking to Bjorling. Borg repeated the denial that he used any form of drugs. "Gossip and lies always have several sources," said Borg's attorney Henning Sjostrom. Last week the five-time Wimbledon champion began his defence in an \$32-million lawsuit by a former friend and business partner, Lars Skarke, stemming from the collapse of Borg's fashion business.

Singer robbed

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Singer-choreographer Paula Abdul was collecting trophies at the American Music Awards show when burglars were helping themselves to her valuables at home. Police said the popular entertainer discovered the robbery when she returned to her Studio City apartment after the awards show, where she was named top female pop-rock vocalist and favourite dance artist. "But there was no sign of forced entry and there was no ransacking," said police spokesman Michael Ranshaw. "Mostly jewelry was taken." A preliminary estimate of her loss was placed at \$3,400, he said. Studio City is northwest of downtown Los Angeles.

'Simple Man'

NASHVILLE, Tennessee (AP) — Entertainer Charlie Daniels says his song "Simple Man," which suggests lynching drug dealers and using child abusers for alligator bait, isn't a reflection of his convictions. "Obviously, I'm being facetious with the song," Daniels said in a recent interview at his ranch near Nashville. "I certainly don't think we should string anybody up from a tree or leave people out in the swamp." The man who used to sing about being "stoned in the morning" and "drunk in the afternoon" said the songs does reflect a change in his attitudes. "The way I put it is, people tell me, 'well, you used to be that way,' and I say, 'yeah, you used to wear diapers, but you don't any more,'" Daniels said. "I don't use drugs in any capacity," Daniels said. "I don't even like to take an aspirin."

Spielberg makes movie on himself

NEW YORK (AP) — Steven Spielberg has done big-budget films about aliens in "E.T." and "Close Encounters," World War II prison camps in "Empire of the Sun" and comic book adventure with "Indiana Jones." What's next? A movie about himself, in a script written by childhood chum and sibling Anne Spielberg. "Annie just wrote a small, wonderful story about the two of us and my mother," he said in an interview with People's magazine. "We're shooting the whole thing in Cincinnati, where it takes place." It's budgeted for only \$5 million, peanuts compared to his usual productions. "I realized when Annie wrote the script that there was no (big budget) value in my childhood, none whatsoever," he said. "It's basically based on experiences we had, friends of ours. It's more a comedy than an intimate portrait of our growing up."

Global weather (major world cities)

	MIN.	MAX.
AMSTERDAM	4	10
ATHENS	10	18
BAHRAIN	14	17
BARCELONA	13	18
BANGKOK	23	29
BELGRADE	28	34
BOMBAY	26	32
CHICAGO	32	38
COPENHAGEN	04	10
DUBLIN	04	10
GENOVA	02	08
HONG KONG	16	19
KARACHI	05	11
LAHORE	07	13
LEON	07	13
MADRID	07	13
MOSCOW	23	29
MUMBAI	26	32
NEW DELHI	11	15
NEW YORK	00	06
PARIS	06	11
ROME	08	11
SYDNEY	09	18
TOKYO	21	25
VIENNA	01	07

M - Indicates missing information.

Savimbi rejects one-party proposal

LISBON (R) — Angolan rebel leader Jonas Savimbi says it would be tantamount to suicide for his UNITA movement to accept a one-party state as demanded by the country's Marxist government.

"It's out of date, even for the conditions in Angola," he said in a television interview Saturday after arriving in Portugal for his first visit in 15 years.

"Who today in the world would accept a one-party system?" Savimbi dismissed the peace proposals presented by President Jose Eduardo dos Santos in a New Year's speech as sophistry which did not advance the faltering peace process.

He was particularly scornful of dos Santos's suggestion that independent associations could exercise political freedoms under the one-party rule of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

"Associations to be controlled by one political party, that does not represent anything," he said with a laugh. "That is not democracy. I cannot accept that."

"You don't ask a man to commit suicide to gain peace," UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola), which has fought the MPLA since independence from Portugal in 1975, is demanding a Western-style, multi-party system.

The issue is at the heart of the impasse in peace efforts led by Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Savimbi, 55, appealed to Portugal to join in the peace efforts, something it has been reluctant to do. But he denied suggestions that he had lost faith in Mobutu's initiative.

Dos Santos, in a similar interview three weeks ago, ruled out the prospect of fighting elections against UNITA. He argued that a one-party system was more appropriate for an African country in Angola's stage of development.

European storm turns political in Britain

LONDON (AP) — The cleanup from a devastating storm that killed 95 people in Europe has barely begun, but weather forecasting has already become a political issue in Britain.

Opposition politicians accuse the government of failing to give enough publicity to forecasts of Thursday's storm, which caused 46 deaths and an estimated \$1.6 billion damage in Britain.

Official reports said another 19 people died in Holland, 10 in Belgium, eight in France, seven in West Germany, four in Denmark and one in East Germany.

The storm, with winds up to 170 kilometres per hour, knocked out power and communications in large areas of Britain and the continent, severely disrupted transportation and uprooted millions of trees.

"If we see the kind of hurricane warnings that occur off the coast of the United States, the way that people are alerted, the way that dangerous structures are shored up, the way that people are warned in terms of transport or getting people off early, we can see a very big difference indeed," David Blunkett, a lawmaker from the opposition Labour Party, said in radio interview.

On Friday night, a group of Labour Party parliamentarians submitted a motion in the House of Commons condemning the government's response to the storm.

"When a storm of that magnitude threatens all or major parts of the country, the government has a duty to ensure that full and frequent warnings are carried on TV and radio. It is deplorable that the government completely failed to do this," the motion said.

British TV seldom devotes more than a minute to a climate that generally drizzles along between warm and cool, and usually wet.

Roger Hunt of the meteorological office said the storm was accurately forecast, but the problem was getting people to pay attention.

"We would like to get to the position where at least the public didn't travel as much as they might otherwise have done if we issue warning to the effect that we expect driving conditions to be extremely hazardous," said Hunt.

That, he said, may take "a good few years of education." Speaking in the House of Commons Friday, Local Government Minister David Hunt insisted that the government responded "swiftly and immediately."

"I understand all affected police forces issues, through the media, warnings about the dangers of travel," he said.

The storm moved across the Baltic Friday and into the Soviet republics of Lithuania and Latvia, where it tapered off.

Forecasters said another severe storm was expected to hit Ireland and Britain Monday, but winds were not expected to exceed 100 kilometres per hour.

As the cleanup continued Saturday, television said 200,000 customers were still without electricity. The forestry commission estimated that three million trees were down.

French coast guard aircraft resumed a search off the Brittany coast for the five crew members of the trawler La Fayette, which sent a distress signal Thursday and has not been seen since then.

Belgian insurance companies estimated Saturday that damage from the storm will exceed \$19 million in their country.

Insurers in Denmark estimated that damage there would total \$19.2 million.

East Germany's one fatality was in the southern city of Karl-Marx-Stadt, where a man was fatally injured when his motor scooter hit a tree uprooted by the storm.

"We don't know exactly what it was, a meteor or a satellite," said Arnold, who has been an air traffic controller for 25 years. "It lasted 25 to 30 seconds and went from brilliant white to an orange as it broke up."

"We've seen things like this before, but much higher. This was quite brilliant. It appeared to have dissipated completely."

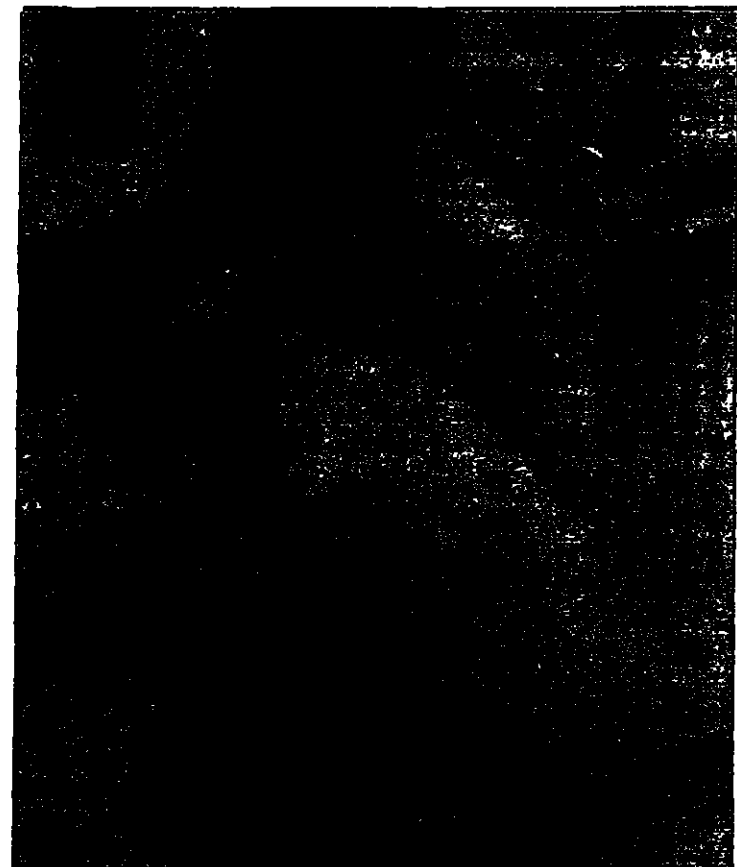
But not all witnesses saw the object change colour and appear to disappear.

A television reporter in Oak Hill, West Virginia, went to the home of one of the first witnesses nearly three hours after the initial sighting and reported the light was still hovering in the sky.

Kitty Harrison, assignment editor for WOAY-TV in Oak Hill, said what she saw was "absolutely not" a meteorite.

"I've seen meteorites before and this doesn't resemble the type of meteorite I've seen," she told the Associated Press in a telephone interview from the home of Elizabeth Gray and her son, Chris, in Stanaford, West Virginia.

"What we are seeing is a very bright bluish white object that appears to be moving downward toward the horizon in an erratic spiraling motion," Harrison told the AP. "It is very slow. You have to keep your eye fixed to



Two young women hold on to a railing in gale force winds in London Friday.

Mysterious light lights up eastern U.S. sky

By Jerry Estill
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Thousands of people in the eastern United States reported seeing a strange bluish-green light in the night sky, and some experts said they could have been viewing an unusually large meteorite.

"We are quite confident it was not a manmade object re-entering," said Dick Adam, spokesman at the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD) in Colorado Springs, Colorado. "We have not idea what it was."

Sightings were reported from the northeastern U.S. state of New York to the mid-Atlantic state of Virginia. Adam confirmed that the air force was getting calls from all of those areas.

"We cannot correlate the sighting with any of the information of the objects we are tracking in space," said Adam. "We are tracking approximately 6,800 objects. Our mission is to keep track of what's in space. Whatever it was, it wasn't one of the objects we're tracking."

Robert Gribble of the National UFO Reporting Centre in Seattle, a private group, also reported receiving dozens of calls.

"Based on descriptions that have been given, I'd say we're dealing with a very large solid, a very large meteor," said Gribble.

"Descriptions run from a blue-green to a bright green coming down in an angular descent leaving a short tail behind it," he said. He said everyone who had telephoned the centre described the object "as coming down and hit-

ting the ground in their area, which is very common in something like this."

Among the people who reported seeing the object was David Arnold, an area air traffic control supervisor at Dulles airport, outside Washington, who reported the sighting at 7:10 p.m. Saturday (0100 GMT Sunday).

"We don't know exactly what it was, a meteor or a satellite," said Arnold, who has been an air traffic controller for 25 years. "It lasted 25 to 30 seconds and went from brilliant white to an orange as it broke up."

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"What we are seeing is a very bright bluish white object that appears to be moving downward toward the horizon in an erratic spiraling motion," Harrison told the AP. "It is very slow. You have to keep your eye fixed to

something stationary in order to see its progress."

Chris Gray, 13, was carrying a firewood to the house when he saw the object.

"I saw the sky light up and then I didn't pay no attention to it until my brother said he saw the same thing," he said. "I was looking in the binoculars and I saw this purplish football with rings around it and it was going around in circles and stuff."

Among the witnesses in the Washington area was Andrew Guthrie, a news editor at the Voice of America since 1983.

"It was a dramatic thing to see," said Guthrie. "I almost drove off the road." He said the object appeared to be "three-or-four times treetop level" and about the size of a grapefruit with an "incandescent bright light."